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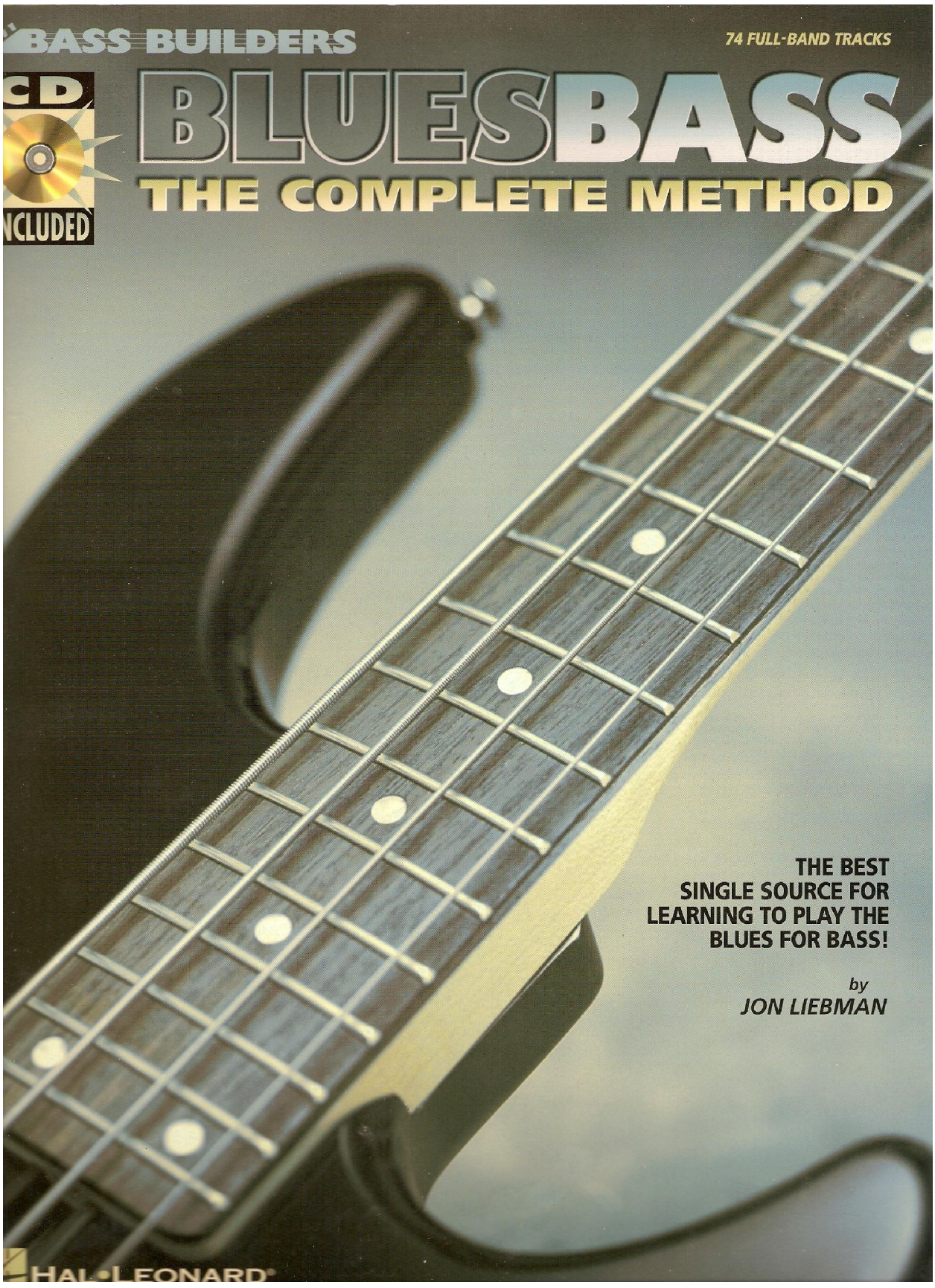
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LEARNING TO PLAY THE
BLUES FOR BASS!
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INTRODUCTION

There's something about the blues: it has a way of reaching our deepest emotions. Often the best way, sometimes even the only way, to express what we are truly feeling is through the blues. With an almost cult-like following, this style of music has become extremely popular among both players and listeners, as evidenced by a surge of blues festivals, radio shows, record labels, and magazines. While remaining true to its deep-rooted traditions, the blues is still alive and well even in this age of the Internet and cyberspace, with a proliferation of blues-oriented web sites where one can explore even the most obscure aspects of "blueslore."

What is it about the blues? It can, of course, make us feel sad, yet it can also make us happy. In tracing the roots of pop music, rock 'n' roll, jazz, R&B, funk, country, soul, folk songs, and just about any other style you can think of, the search will invariably lead to the blues. No other style of music can claim to be the source of so many others. The blues also has a way of bringing musicians together by forming a common denominator to which everybody can relate, regardless of the style of music to which they may be predisposed.

Maybe you've been in a situation like this: You're with two or more musicians getting together to make some music. You may or may not know the others, but even if you do, you've never made music with them before. Someone who's into rock 'n' roll might ask, "Do you know 'Take Me to the River'?" The question is met with a response such as, "I think I might. How does it go?" There is an uncomfortable hesitation, and someone says, "How about 'Knock on Wood'?" And you say something like, "Go ahead. I'll follow you," which is not the reaction the suggester was hoping for. The same thing happens in jazz: "Do you know Coltrane's 'Lazy Bird'?" Or, "How about 'Stars Fell on Alabama'?" You're shifting your feet and hoping it's in the fake book you brought with you. After realizing you haven't found any common ground, somebody (maybe even everybody, all at once) inevitably will say, "How about a blues?" The reaction is generally positive and unanimous. There's just something about the blues.

How This Book Works

My intent in writing this book is to provide you with the most practical, *useful* information possible. It is crucial for you as a blues bassist to understand your role in playing the blues. In order for you to become a much sought-after bassist, you need to know exactly what is expected of you by other musicians, as well as by audiences, and how to approach the music accordingly. Everything in this book was written with this goal in mind.

It is always helpful to have some historical perspective on the kind of music you're setting out to play. You need to know a little something about the nature of the blues, how the style was formed, and how it evolved. That way, you can capture the true essence of what it means to play the blues. This book will provide you with that history, and much, much more. Here's how the book is organized, chapter by chapter:

Chapter 1 A History of the Blues

In Chapter 1, we'll trace the development of the blues from the early days of slavery to the Mississippi Delta and the migration to Texas and New Orleans, Chicago, and the West Coast. We'll cover the spawning of blues spinoffs, including jazz, boogie woogie, R&B, and rock 'n' roll. We'll also discuss many of the blues heroes over the decades, including Bessie Smith, Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, B.B. King, John Mayall, Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and many others. In a special section called "Blues and the Bass," we'll even discuss the impact of bass giants over the years, from Walter Page and Willie Dixon to Roscoe Beck, Jack Bruce, and Tommy Shannon.

Chapter 2

Blues Basics

Chapter 2 provides a study of the basic building blocks for playing the blues. The goal of this section is to get the blues sound in your head as well as under your fingers. We'll explore variations of the blues scale, characteristics of a blues melody, and the derivation of the twelve-bar blues, with several forms for you to study and practice. We'll also cover some common blues features known as "tags" and "turnarounds," and we'll work on some classic blues endings that you'll need to have in your blues vocabulary.

Chapter 3

The Grooves

In Chapter 3, we're going to get down to the business of making music. This section contains dozens of blues grooves for you to learn and practice and play over and over. If you like, you can even skip over the first two chapters (temporarily, of course!) and begin your studies here. As I say in all my books, "Groove is everything, and everything must groove." These grooves provide the basis for how you should play in a jam session, on a gig, in a recording session, or anywhere you need to play the blues. One thing to keep in mind: In a real live playing situation, you'll need to exercise discipline in anchoring the music—with the help of the drummer—to provide the foundation for the rest of the band. That's your job as a blues bassist! In other words: soloing, playing flashy licks, and showing off are not part of your job as a blues bassist—except for about 1% of the time. It's important to have "groove wisdom," which shows that you have the musical maturity to know when it's OK to step into the spotlight and actually have the band support you for a change, and when it's time to get back down to "the bottom line," to support the band and do what you were hired to do.

Chapter 4

Blues Soloing

Having said all that (and hopefully having absolved myself from any potential lawsuits from your bandleaders), there is nothing at all wrong with knowing how to play a blues bass solo. In fact, in the right hands, it's a good thing! Chapter 4 is devoted to building a vocabulary for soloing. In order to provide you with the most benefit from this lesson, each example is the length of a complete twelve-bar blues, rather than a series of isolated blues fragments. That way, you'll understand the context of each phrase much better. This chapter will give you loads of ideas for building your own arsenal of blues licks and solo concepts. You'll have a lot of fun playing them, too.

✦ ✦ ✦

Wouldn't music be boring if everything was played in just one or two keys? Surely there's nothing wrong with guitar players and bass players "getting down" in the keys of E and A, but part of being a well-rounded musician is having the ability to read and play *in all twelve keys*. Therefore, in *Blues Bass,* we'll be working out in every key. As I always say, there are no such things as "easy" keys and "hard" keys—only "familiar" keys and "unfamiliar" keys. You'll thank me for it in the end.

By the time you complete this book, you'll have a good understanding of the history and evolution of the blues, including where it began and how it got to where it is today. You'll have a good working knowledge of blues basics, including the blues scale, melody, harmony, blues forms, and other important blues characteristics. You'll understand the role of the blues bassist and have lots of blues grooves to hear, study, learn, practice, and understand. You'll also have the means for developing your own blues vocabulary for soloing, increasing your potential for self-expression. Finally, with the "Recommended Listening" section at the end of this book, you'll have a resource of blues recordings to pursue, leading you to an invaluable treasure of this great style of music we call the blues.

In short, you'll have the means necessary to be a part of that "something" about the blues. The rest is up to you. Start living and breathing the blues!

J.L.

PRACTICE TIPS

Proper practice techniques are crucial in any kind of music, including the blues. Please be sure that you're in the proper frame of mind when you practice and that you approach the music very diligently. Here are a few suggestions:

- When you practice, create an environment that's conducive to study. Find a time when you won't be disturbed, and keep distractions out of sight.
- Consider keeping a log of your sessions. Get a calendar in which you'll record nothing but your practice schedules. Every day, take into account how much time you'll spend practicing and what you need to work on. Budget your time accordingly.
- When practicing by yourself, always use a metronome, or better yet, a drum machine. Concentrate not only on playing in time, but playing with a great time *feel.* (In other words, don't worry about playing eighty-bizillion sixteenth notes a minute!)
- Whenever you can, get together with a good drummer, and *groove.*
- Tape yourself, and then listen back to your playing. Recording your playing may reveal many flaws and bad habits of which you weren't aware. It'll let you zero in on the attack and release of each note, as well as your sustain, intonation, time feel, and overall sound. Tape recorders don't lie!
- Learn bass grooves from records, and then play along with them.
- Keep a music notebook of any new ideas that hit you. If you hear something while practicing, write it down.

Of course, *Blues Bass* also includes an accompanying CD that contains performances of all the blues grooves and solos in this book (Chapters 3 and 4). Every track includes guitar and drum accompaniment to help put the music into its proper context, to better illustrate the blues styles and interpretations, and to enhance your overall educational and entertainment experience. You'll notice that the music is separated, with the guitar and drums on the left channel, and the bass, alone, on the right. That way, you can isolate and study the bass track by itself, or turn down the bass completely and play along with the rest of the band. Yet another option is to listen to the CD "as is," to hear how the guitar, bass, and drums work together to lay down that all-important blues foundation. I hope you'll take advantage of this versatility and gain the maximum benefit from this practice tool.

CHAPTER 1
A History of the Blues

This is the story of the blues. It starts in the cotton fields of America's deep South and travels to Chicago, the West Coast, and other regions. The story describes how the blues inspired the creation of jazz, boogie woogie, R&B, and rock 'n' roll. Most importantly, it is a tribute to the men and women who made it all happen.

Since it was first "discovered," the blues has met with varying degrees of acceptance over the years. It has experienced a few heydays, both before and after World War II. At other times, it has been brushed aside out of interest for the latest fad. The blues has also enjoyed revivals, most notably in the '60s and again in the '80s. With the proliferation of musical styles, cultures, "vibes," and "scenes," along with the emphasis society has always placed on each of these factors, the blues has held up strong over the generations.

The blues, however, is not just "some other form" of music. The true essence of the blues packs an emotional wallop in the way it conveys knowledge and wisdom, heartache and suffering, truth and understanding, and painful advice, all by way of rhythm and sometimes dance. Jazz, rock 'n' roll, some folk music, pop, and several other styles can (and should) claim the blues as being the source of their true musical roots. Though these styles have come into their own, each with its own pack of loyal followers (as evidenced by clubs, record labels, festivals, books, movies, etc.), the blues is still here. It all began with the blues.

THE DAWN OF THE BLUES

The origins of the blues can be traced back hundreds of years. In fact, the earliest blues came from African slaves, who arrived by ship at the docks in Virginia as far back as 1619. Forced to endure many years of backbreaking labor on the farms and in the fields, the slaves wailed and moaned in pain and sang about their homeland. The slaves were not permitted to talk to one another while they worked, but they were allowed to sing, as the bosses discovered that their singing actually increased the slaves' productivity. Even after the slaves were freed, many black musicians continued to develop and perform the blues. By the earliest days of the twentieth century, these years of refinement and growth culminated into what we now know as the popular twelve-bar blues form.

Initially, the ones who popularized the blues and made it accessible to the public were the blues singers. One of the most highly regarded classic blues singers was Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, often referred to as "Mother of the Blues," due to her longstanding influence on other blues singers. She was quite possibly the first female singer to inject elements of blues into vaudeville and minstrel shows in the very early 1900s.

Mamie Smith, a black vaudeville and cabaret singer, had the distinction of making the first blues record, "Crazy Blues," for Okeh Records in 1920. The staggering success of this record (it sold over a million copies within a year of its release) inspired other record labels to record blues songs in an attempt to capitalize on this newly discovered musical style.

The greatest and most influential of all the classic blues singers was Bessie Smith, who established herself while touring with Ma Rainey's Rabbit Foot Minstrels. Considered a master of interpretation and phrasing in all moods—happy, sad, fast, and slow—she pleased her record-buying fans with practically everything she sang. At the height of her career, Bessie Smith (no relation to Mamie) was playing to packed houses throughout the South, as well as the North and the Midwest. Her record sales numbered in the hundreds of thousands and her earnings (in the 1920s, mind you) were in excess of $2,000 a week! Often referred to as "Empress of the Blues," Bessie Smith became the most respected black singer in the country by the end of the 1920s, and the barometer against which virtually all future female blues singers were measured.

Other important blues singers during the early part of the century included Ida Cox, Memphis Minnie, Big Mama Thornton, and Sippie Wallace.

DELTA BLUES

You may have heard the term "Delta blues" or maybe a reference to the "Mississippi Delta." The Delta is a name given to the area centered around Clarksdale, Mississippi, near the northwestern corner of the state (funny thing, though—it's nowhere near the mouth of any river!). The Delta encompasses about two hundred miles of flat, low-lying plain. It also includes parts of Arkansas and rural Tennessee.

Most historians agree that this is the land where the blues evolved from the field hollers and work songs to spirituals, ragtime songs, and other forms of music that became prevalent toward the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. During this period, blacks migrated into the Delta from all parts of the South, pursuing work on plantations, in sawmills, and in lumberyards and turpentine camps. This influx brought together a variety of musical influences and traditions, forming, in a sense, a melting pot of black culture. As a result, the Delta produced more famous and highly influential blues artists than any other region in the South. In pondering the Delta blues, the image that usually comes to mind is a man alone with his guitar. This guitar-playing bluesman defined the essence of Delta blues.

The first great Delta bluesman was Charley Patton, who had a rough, coarse voice and a distinctive "Delta growl," along with an innovative percussive slide guitar style (for which he used a bottleneck). It was mainly these traits that made him the most celebrated blues artist of his generation. His approach to the blues defined the style for that region, and his influence was easily recognized in the music of countless blues lovers for years to come.

One of the most highly regarded figures in blues history was Robert Johnson, a guitar master of the Delta blues. According to legend, Johnson acquired his phenomenal guitar abilities by selling his soul to the devil. His style included frequent use of walking bass lines (you hear that, bass players?!), as well as slide guitar. Though he only had two recording sessions (one in a San Antonio hotel room in 1936, the other in a Dallas warehouse in 1937), the twenty-nine songs documented on those dates have inspired more musicians than any others in blues history. Johnson's complete recordings, on two CDs, were rereleased by Columbia in 1990.

A major blues figure and pioneer in the development of the Mississippi Delta blues style in the 1920s and 30s was a man who called himself Son House. A guitar player, naturally, House's style has been described as "furious," and his singing as "intensely emotional." He was a profound influence on many blues guitarists over the years.

Other important blues artists of the Mississippi Delta include Skip James, Ishman Bracey, Bukka White, Tommy Johnson, Willie Brown, Rubin Lacy, and many others.

The Delta "man and his guitar" concept no doubt influenced scores of guitarists who used it as a foundation upon which they built their careers. The early folk-oriented singer/acoustic guitarists included Josh White and Leadbelly. Variations of the style remained popular in later years, as demonstrated by John Hammond, Jr., Bob Dylan, and, most recently, Keb' Mo'.

THE BLUES MIGRATION

Though the beginnings of the blues date back to Africa and the slave ships, and eventually took root in the cotton fields of the Mississippi Delta, a migration of blacks carried the blues to other parts of the country. As the style continued to develop, it now had the impact of new geographic regions putting their own stamp upon the blues, leading to the development of different sub-genres of blues within the style. In addition, the impact of improved recording technology and the increased accessibility of records made for improved methods of sharing information among regions, which, in turn, heightened the influence and sped up the blues' growth and variety. Other areas of the South, as well as the Midwest and the West Coast, all became hubs of blues activity and development.

Texas Blues

When the Delta blues arrived in Texas, it found its way to mingling with the other styles that were already popular in the Lone Star state, including Cajun, Creole, Hispanic, and vaudeville. Jazz was also quite prominent in Texas, effecting widespread popularity of guitar and piano shuffles, which quickly made their way into the blues.

Naturally, Texas took to the blues in a big way, contributing a long list of blues heroes over the decades. One of the state's most influential country bluesmen was Blind Lemon Jefferson, the first great male blues star of the 1920s, who was also noted for his accomplished guitar playing. Perhaps his greatest contribution to the music lies in the fact that he paved the way for other male blues singer/guitarists in an area that had previously been dominated by Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and other female singers.

As Texas blues continued to grow and develop, the next major Texas bluesman was Lightnin' Hopkins, considered by some blues historians to be the most recorded blues artist in history. Initially a vital link between country blues and urban blues, Lightnin's repertoire encompassed everything from electric guitar and boogie woogie to R&B and rock 'n' roll. His unique style incorporated a half-spoken, half-sung delivery, often accented with his signature guitar pull-offs and single-string runs and his inimitable storytelling.

A cousin of Lightnin' Hopkins, Albert Collins was one of the most exciting blues acts in the business in the early '60s. Born and raised in Texas, Collins was a key figure in that state's blues guitar tradition. His shrill, "icy" guitar trademark was produced by the use of minor tunings, placing a capo high on the neck of his guitar, and percussive picking. His career peaked in the '80s, as he was one of the first blues artists to attain blues star status during that decade's blues revival.

Other Texas blues artists have included Blind Willie Johnson, B.K. Turner (a.k.a. the "Black Ace"), Algier "Texas" Alexander (a.k.a. "The Voice of Texas"), Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, and others. Delbert McClinton, a popular blues artist in the latter half of the twentieth century, also hails from Texas.

New Orleans Blues

New Orleans had an even wider variety of music than Texas, with which the Delta blues would blend with some fantastic results. In the Crescent City, one could find brass bands, ragtime, Dixieland, Cajun, Creole, Latin, boogie woogie, and other styles. New Orleans blues had an even heavier reliance on the piano than did Texas. This modification was quite a departure from the original Delta influence and took the blues in a completely different direction, both stylistically and rhythmically.

One of the pioneers of the New Orleans rhythm and blues style was Henry Roeland Byrd, better known as "Professor Longhair." 'Fess, as he was called, was best known for his piano style, which was a strange combination of jazz, blues, ragtime, calypso, and zydeco. Many blues, R&B, and rock piano players acquired their roots through the influence of old 'Fess.

One major star to come out of New Orleans was the inimitable Fats Domino, who built a career on his charm and innocence, which he used to accent his bouncy piano style, his band's electrifying sax solos, and irresistible rhythm. Though his music is based on the blues, he made a good showing on the rock charts, too.

Another notable New Orleans original is Dr. John, who picked up on the practice of combining various musical elements (R&B, jazz, etc.) then added a few of his own (funk, pop, rock), thus creating his own blend of the blues. With piano as his main instrument (he also played guitar and bass until he lost the tip of his finger when a gun went off during a barroom fight), Dr. John has played on hundreds of recordings, worked as an arranger and producer, and is quite a prolific composer. A true showman, he has performed at virtually every major jazz and blues festival in the U.S. as well as overseas.

Other important New Orleans bluesmen included: Allen Toussaint, Huey "Piano" Smith, Earl King, Dave Bartholomew, and James Booker, to name but a few.

Blues in Georgia and the Carolinas

As the migration progressed, the blues was introduced into more and more places, each one continuing to put its own mark on the style. The variety would be dependent upon the circumstances in each locale and, of course, upon the individuals making the music. Along the Eastern seaboard, the main instrument was still the guitar. The blues guitar players in this region tended to be more sophisticated than their counterparts in the Delta and the Southwest, exhibiting a keener understanding of passing chords and creating music that was more songlike and traditional, demonstrating the influence of older ragtime and minstrel songs.

This region produced some important blues figures (don't ask me why almost all of them were blind), including: Blind Blake, Blind Boy Fuller, Blind Willie McTell, Reverend Blind Gary Davis, and Peg Leg Howell.

West Coast Blues

By the 1940s, the migration had reached a point where Delta blues was now considered the roots, and the style had given way to an almost completely urban phenomenon. New anti-discrimination laws were passed, opening up opportunities for blacks in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other cities, where blacks flocked in order to take jobs in shipyards and in defense industry positions. Naturally, black musicians relocated along with the rest of the black population. Interestingly, though, the musicians who streamed into California seemed to be much more intent on becoming full-time entertainers rather than supplementing their income by taking whatever gigs they could get in the clubs. Much of the West Coast style reflected an earthier, workingman's sound, yet at the same time was presented in a more flamboyant jazz-like fashion, often accompanied by horn sections (just something about California, I guess).

Perhaps the most important blues artist of the West Coast movement was T-Bone Walker, considered the creator of the electric blues guitar style. He was the first blues artist to play the electric guitar, and he accomplished more with it than anybody else. Not only was he a master of the shuffle rhythm and a dynamic soloist, he was also a brilliant entertainer with a surefire command of his audience. T-Bone would spice up his shows by playing the guitar behind his back, doing splits and turns and other feats of showmanship that audiences just loved (especially the ladies). He has had an enormous amount of influence on guitarists of all generations, including B.B. King, Jimi Hendrix, Buddy Guy, Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and others.

Other important West Coast blues artists include: Pee Wee Crayton, Lowell Fulson, Charles Brown, Johnny "Guitar" Watson, and others.

Chicago Blues

Without a doubt, the most profound impact on the blues migration occurred in Chicago. The phenomenon of industrialization in the North attracted more and more blacks from Mississippi and the South into a land filled with hope and promise. The Windy City became a cauldron of blues development that propelled the early Delta style into a whole new direction. Building on the roots of the "traditional" country blues, Chicago transformed the genre into an electrified urban blues culture, replete with electric guitars and harmonicas, producing some of the best known blues artists of all time.

During the 1930s and '40s, several bluesmen, like Tampa Red, Robert Nighthawk, Lonnie Johnson, and Scrapper Blackwell, were significant for the contributions they made during the initial transition period between country and urban blues. The best known of these catalysts was Big Bill Broonzy, one of the most important musicians in Chicago's pre-World War II blues scene. Broonzy's style combined the coarser elements of rural, country blues with the smoother sounds of the "new" urban blues, including smatterings of ragtime, spirituals, and traditional folk blues. He remained atop the blues scene until the public's tastes changed, favoring the electric guitar and its new rising stars—changes that brushed his brand of blues aside.

The star of the next generation of Chicago blues was the one and only Muddy Waters, who dominated that scene during the 1950s. On the heels of Tampa Red and Big Bill Broonzy, Waters' role in blues history lies largely in the way he solidified that vital link between the blues of the deep Mississippi Delta and the harder edged, urban-oriented electric sound of Chicago blues. More than any other musician, Muddy Waters was the pivotal force between old blues and new blues during the post-war period in Chicago.

Waters was known for his intense slide guitar work, in addition to his compelling songwriting abilities, live showmanship, recording artistry, and the respect he commanded as an excellent bandleader. He was able to express a variety of emotions, from hardship and suffering to utter happiness. Influenced greatly by Robert Johnson and Son House, Muddy Waters took the raw intensity he gained from these two mentors and applied the same urgency to the electric guitar, with his own innovative approach. Many guitarists, both American and British, cited Muddy Waters as a significant influence on their playing. It is for these reasons that Muddy Waters stands out as one of the greatest blues artists of all time, often the yardstick against which other blues artists are measured.

Though Muddy Waters was the most popular bluesman of his day, he was not the only force to be reckoned with at this point in blues history. Among Muddy's contemporaries were Johnny Shines and Robert Lockwood, Jr., two important bluesmen who were raised in the Delta and instrumental in carrying on the legacy of Robert Johnson's guitar work.

Elmore James was another Johnson disciple who became an important cog in the transition from the "old style" Delta blues to the new urban Chicago style. James is best known for the powerful influence he wielded as the single most important slide guitarist of the post-war era. The legacy he left on slide guitar blues, in his own hard-driving fashion, was incorporated into the playing of blues guitar greats Eric Clapton, Johnny Winter, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and others.

Buddy Guy was a Chicago blues trailblazer who, in his '60s heyday, helped push the blues guitar into the post-modern era. Known for his single-string intensity and his quasi-gospel singing voice, Guy was popular as a session player, as well as a solo artist. Among Guy's Chicago contemporaries were Magic Sam, Otis Rush, and Freddie King.

The electric guitar was not the only breakthrough in post-war Chicago blues. The harmonica (often called "blues harp" or simply "harp") became an extremely prominent part of Chicago blues. One of the greatest and most influential of the harp players during this era was Little Walter, who made the harmonica an integral part of this new urban blues sound. Others who helped define the Chicago blues harp sound include Sonny Boy Williamson*, Junior Wells, and James Cotton.

As the blues continued to flourish, its appeal continued to grow, including the appeal to non-black audiences. Two other very popular vocalist/harpists to come from Chicago were Paul Butterfield, who was white, and Charlie Musselwhite, a Native American from the Choctaw tribe.

Probably the most electrifying showman in modern blues history was Howlin' Wolf, who was at the forefront of electric Chicago blues in the '50s and early '60s. His imposing frame (he was well over six feet tall and weighed nearly three hundred pounds) made his blues performances larger than life. His concerts were quite a spectacle to behold—their intensity gave new meaning to the blues.

The impact that Chicago has had on the growth and development of the blues is powerful, to say the least. Other blues masters who made important contributions to Chicago blues include: Jimmy Yancey, Lester Melrose, Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup, Big Joe Williams, Lonnie Brooks, Koko Taylor, and so many others.

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* Actually, Chicago had two prominent blues musicians who went by the name of Sonny Boy Williamson. John Lee Williamson, often called Sonny Boy Williamson I, was killed in 1948 on his way home from a Chicago bar. He left a legacy as an extremely influential blues harpist in pre-war Chicago blues. Aleck Ford, or Sonny Boy Williamson II, who also went by the name Rice Miller (confused yet?), was another extremely influential Chicago-based vocalist/harpist. Colorful and flamboyant to be sure, he is usually the one people mean when they refer to Sonny Boy Williamson, though both were important figures in blues history.

BOOGIE WOOGIE BLUES

One of the highlights of the blues migration was the period during the 1930s and '40s when the style blossomed from the old folk music standard to the new, more popular urban sound. One of the music crazes during this period was a style called boogie woogie. The boogie-woogie sound is generally associated with a piano, improvising over a standard blues progression in the right hand while playing a repetitive eight-to-the-bar bass line with the left. Most often these bass lines are typical walking blues bass lines played in broken octaves. (Of course, when these lines are doubled with a real bass, the music is enhanced beyond words!)

Though boogie woogie became the rage during this period, it actually came into play several years before. In fact, some say its inception dates as far back as the turn of the century. Among the earliest figures in the development of boogie woogie were two piano players from Alabama, named Pine Top Smith and Cow Cow Davenport.

The sound caught the attention of Chicago pianist Meade Lux Lewis, who helped turn boogie woogie into a major blues piano style in the '30s and '40s. Along with his contemporaries, pianists Albert Ammons and Pete Johnson, and blues shouter Big Joe Turner, Lewis popularized the form by taking it out of the clubs and the joints and onto the concert stage. It was in these venues, toward the end of the '30s, that boogie woogie developed a huge following, attracting appreciative audiences and laying the foundations for R&B and later rock 'n' roll.

One of the titans of post-World War II boogie woogie blues was John Lee Hooker, who made his indelible mark with a chugging guitar rhythm and one of the most distinctive singing voices in all of bluesdom. Hooker's ascent to prominence took place in Detroit, unlike so many of the other major blues figures who came from Chicago, Texas, or Memphis. Most prolific in the studio, Hooker made nearly as many records as Lightnin' Hopkins. He has influenced everyone from the Rolling Stones and Fleetwood Mac to Johnny Winter and Bruce Springsteen. Born in 1920, John Lee Hooker has earned the distinction of being one of the "elder statesmen" of the blues.

IS IT JAZZ OR IS IT BLUES?

It used to be that any search for books about blues led diligent researchers to books about jazz history, with an almost obligatory chapter devoted to the blues. The books would mention Bessie Smith and discuss New Orleans, defining blues as the forerunner of jazz. Actually, that approach is valid and, from the perspective of a jazz history book, necessary. Seldom, if ever, do those books mention Charley Patton, Blind Lemon Jefferson, or Robert Johnson. Nor should they, as these bluesmen were not jazz players. It wasn't until about the 1960s, with the onset of the first blues revival, that blues started to become recognized, not only as the embryo of jazz, but as a style in its own right.

Jazz is certainly indebted to the blues. Through its development over the decades and the rise of just about all of the jazz superstars, the blues was and always will be a dominant force in the American art form known as jazz. The Original Dixieland Jazz Band, the first jazz group to make a recording, was, without question, beholden to the blues. From the earliest jazz heroes like Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong, Buddy Bolden, Sidney Bechet, Jelly Roll Morton, and many others, the blues has always played a vital role in jazz. So much of the jazz structure and repertoire is based on the blues, along with its fundamental components of rhythm, melody, and harmony.

In many cases, these artists would cross over into boogie woogie and other styles, further obscuring the lines between jazz and blues. Louis Jordan, with his own "jump blues" style, pushed the jazz envelope even further. With hits like "Five Guys Named Moe," "Caldonia," and "Saturday Night Fish Fry," Jordan is known not so much as a jazz artist (though he performed with Chick Webb and Ella Fitzgerald), but primarily as one who blazed right through R&B and helped set the stage for rock 'n' roll.

The blues continued to be a major component in jazz, through the Big Band era (Glenn Miller, Count Basie), bebop (Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie), modal jazz (Miles Davis, John Coltrane), fu-

sion (John McLaughlin, Chick Corea), and beyond. So many jazz artists rose to prominence, many even attaining superstar status in their field. At least one thing they had in common was that they all owed a debt of gratitude to the blues. A partial list includes: Bennie Moten, Charlie Christian, Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, Jay McShann, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, and Julian "Cannonball" Adderley, among others. Many singers fit this jazz/blues crossover category, too, including Billie Holiday, Nat King Cole, Jimmy Rushing, Mose Allison, and many others.

ROCK 'N' ROLL AND BLUES

As Muddy Waters used to sing, "The blues had a baby, and they named it rock 'n' roll." If jazz owes a lot to the blues, then rock 'n' roll owes at least as much, as so much of its roots are based on the blues. This influence can be traced to the earliest days of rock 'n' roll, through the hands (and mouths) of Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, and others. Through the years, bands like Canned Heat, the Allman Brothers Band, and singer Janis Joplin all built successful careers on music that was based largely, if not entirely, on the blues.

Naturally, the guitar maintained a position of great prominence in rock 'n' roll (or did you already know that?). One of rock's most innovative and revolutionary electric guitarists was Jimi Hendrix, who developed much of his repertoire by building on a foundation of blues music. In concert, Jimi would often play extended versions of tunes like "Red House" and "California Night," paying homage to the blues. Just as Louie Armstrong, Count Basie, and others "stole" essential elements of the blues, sending jazz down a newly discovered fork in the road, so did Hendrix in his picking up the '60s blues baton and forging through yet another detour, this time down the rock 'n' roll superhighway, taking the best of the best of the blues along with him.

Not only had blues and jazz continued to find increasing appeal with white audiences, but rock 'n' roll in general, and blues-rock in particular, quickly went the same route. One catalyst in introducing the blues to white audiences was Johnny Winter, a white blues guitarist from Texas. Johnny Winter was catapulted into stardom after his first album, paying tribute to the Delta and Chicago blues styles, was released in 1969. He was immediately compared to British guitar giants Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, and Jimmy Page and heightened the allure of blues-rock manyfold.

Another blues-rock guitar superhero, also from the state of Texas was the late, great Stevie Ray Vaughan. By the 1980s, the blues revival of the '60s and the overall interest in the blues seemed to have reached a plateau. Those who were interested knew where they could go to hear it, in many cases either by seeking obscure, almost cult-like blues bars or through listening to old recordings and enjoying the blues via "taking it off the shelf." Then along came Stevie Ray, injecting new life and boundless energy into the blues, inciting a revival even bigger than the one that occurred a generation earlier.

Vaughan's appeal was in his stellar guitar technique, following in the tradition of Jimi Hendrix (only without the '60s-inspired psychedelia) and in his high-energy live performances. These traits (combined with the fact that he liked to play loud!) attracted large rock audiences. His musical roots, as well as his repertoire, though, were most definitely the blues. If rock is indebted to the blues, then the blues is indebted to Stevie Ray Vaughan, who did more than anyone to revitalize and introduce the blues to yet another generation of music lovers.

Stevie Ray's brother, guitarist Jimmie Vaughan, a blues artist in his own right, has done his share of keeping the blues alive and well. In 1974, he formed the Fabulous Thunderbirds with singer/harpist Kim Wilson. The group's bar-band feel incorporated elements of Texas blues, R&B, soul, and rock 'n' roll. The band made a significant contribution to the blues revival of the '80s, putting Austin, Texas securely on the blues map.

Yet another major blues-rock force hailing from Texas is the band ZZ Top. Formed in 1969, ZZ Top has a major following worldwide as a Texas rock band built on a blues foundation. Guitarist Billy Gibbons, bassist Dusty Hill, and drummer Frank Beard have attained enormous success by way of non-stop touring and top-selling albums. (See, folks? That's all it takes!) After thirty years of evolv-

ing, "Top" can't really be considered a blues band in the true sense (I guess they discovered there's more money in rock 'n' roll). Still, their tribute to the blues is most evident in their early music, where one can hear the boogie influences of John Lee Hooker and the bluesmen from the Mississippi Delta. Their sincere devotion to the blues is also evident in the fact that they have helped raise money to support the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale.

Another important blues-rocker is Bonnie Raitt, who comes from Burbank, California (in case you were beginning to wonder, this is the "rock" section, *not* the "Texas" section). Bonnie is a master slide guitarist with very definite blues roots. Like many others, her career gravitated toward the pop arena, though her concerts always include plenty of blues numbers. As further testimony that she comes from the blues, Raitt has often invited bluesman, pianist, and crooner Charles Brown to accompany her on tours as her opening act, along with singer Ruth (no relation) Brown. Bonnie is also responsible for introducing Sippie Wallace to a new generation of appreciative blues fans.

THE BRITISH BLUES INVASION

It seems that over in England, they're always taking a good look at what's happening in America (musically, at least) and adding their own two-shillings' worth. You've undoubtedly heard of the "British Invasion" of the '60s, when the Beatles, the Stones, and scores of other English groups took the rock world by storm. With the blues being the major building block of rock 'n' roll, this British influence, therefore, was as profoundly a blues phenomenon, as it was rock 'n' roll.*

The foremost British blues ambassador in the 1960s was singer/keyboardist/harpist John Mayall. Mayall's band, the Bluesbreakers, became somewhat of a training ground for up-and-coming young musicians. Among the youthful stalwarts educated in the Bluesbreakers were guitarists Mick Taylor and Eric Clapton, bass players Jack Bruce and John McVie, and drummer Mick Fleetwood. Mayall's legacy on the British blues scene in the '60s has since permeated the blues-rock scene and endured for decades.

As guitar superheroes go, nobody was more respected and more loved as a blues artist in 1960s England than Eric Clapton, Britain's first great guitar champion. In addition to being an alumnus of John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, Clapton was also a dedicated student of the three Kings—B.B., Freddie, and Albert—as well as a disciple of Robert Johnson, Little Walter, and Muddy Waters.

Clapton's importance lies in the fact that he helped create a hybrid of blues and rock that has influenced virtually every rock group since the '60s. He was also a member of Blind Faith, the Yardbirds, Cream, and Derek & the Dominoes (the group that recorded "Layla"), further pushing the envelope of blues-rock guitar and launching him into the categories of "superstar" and "guitar genius." Though he, too, has ended up more as a rocker than a bluesman, his live shows always include enough great blues playing to satisfy even the heaviest blues junkies. If you ever get a chance to see Clapton live, don't miss it.

Two other major British guitar superheroes are Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page, each of whom took a shift with the Yardbirds after Clapton's departure. Beck subsequently covered a lot of turf on the musical spectrum, recording with everyone from rocker Rod Stewart to fusionist Jan Hammer. Page, of course, was a co-founder of Led Zeppelin, a band that ended up as a hardcore rock 'n' roll band with very definite blues beginnings.

Other important British rock bands heavily influenced by the blues include the Rolling Stones, the Animals, Fleetwood Mac (especially in their early years), Savoy Brown, and Ten Years After.

For a more complete account of rock 'n' roll and the British invasion, including the music's history and development, the impact of society, politics, history, and culture (not to mention grooves galore and plenty of challenging solos), please refer to my book Rock Bass, *also published by Hal Leonard.*

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* As a matter of fact, in this case, the British were busy developing the blues-rock style even before it took off in America!

THE SOULFUL SIDE OF BLUES

As the blues train charged ahead, new variations of the style continued sprouting up all over the place. Another twist that was blended into the blues, most notably in the South, was the element of soul.

The first major blues guitarist to cross over to modern soul was Albert King. A left-hander, King used to play his guitar upside down, with the strings set up as if for a righty. A master of the single-string solo, his sound was focused on tone and intensity, with his own signature string bend that evoked a distinctive, anguished blues sound. King rose to blues celebrity status when he signed with Stax Records and began working with Booker T. & the MGs, helping forge that unique Memphis soul.

Not to say that Ray Charles doesn't belong in a blues book, but he would also fit equally well into books on R&B, soul, country, and pop. Often called the "Father of Soul," Ray Charles's influence dates back to the '50s, when he began combining elements of blues, gospel, and R&B, creating the model for practically every soul singer who followed him.

Another of the primary creators of the modern soul/blues style was Bobby "Blue" Bland, who also incorporated bits of gospel with blues and R&B into his "soul stew." Other singers who combined the blues with soul include: Sam Cooke, Junior Parker, Aretha Franklin, Etta James, Wilson Pickett, Otis Redding, Sam & Dave, Dinah Washington, James Brown, and Mahalia Jackson.

During the '70s, Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi created a tongue-in-cheek tribute to the Stax/Volt Memphis soul sound by forming the Blues Brothers. The group attracted quite a following, due mostly to its exposure on TV's "Saturday Night Live," in which both Aykroyd and Belushi starred. Their back-up band couldn't have been more authentic, as it included Stax/Volt session men, Steve Cropper and Donald "Duck" Dunn, along with blues guitarist Matt "Guitar" Murphy. The Blues Brothers starred in a motion picture of the same name and released a few albums. The band continued until Belushi's death in 1982.

An important blues artist who emerged during the '80s was Robert Cray, a guitarist/vocalist born in Columbus, Georgia. Growing up listening to Ray Charles, Sam Cooke, and other early soul singers, Cray would eventually play an important role in the blues revival of the '80s. His music, heavily laced with soul, R&B, gospel, and pop, did much to integrate the blues as a formidable element of contemporary music. His performances with Eric Clapton, Buddy Guy, and Albert Collins have cemented his standing in blues history.

One of the most successful blues artists of all time, with one of the busiest touring schedules imaginable, is the incomparable B.B. King. As far as musical "categories" go, knowing where to classify B.B. King can be difficult, if not impossible. Born in Mississippi, the singer/guitarist worked as a farmhand, where he became steeped in the tradition of Delta blues. He also spent many of his formative years in Memphis, where much of his music "education" took shape. His influences are diverse, including everyone from blues moguls Blind Lemon Jefferson, Lonnie Johnson, and T-Bone Walker to jazz guitar legends Charlie Christian, Eddie Lang, and Django Reinhardt. King's music contains elements of deep Mississippi blues, combined with strains of jazz, gospel, and rock. He has been high on the R&B and rock charts. The undercurrent of soul that has always emerged from his guitar and voice make this section appropriate for his inclusion.

Though B.B.'s guitar playing is not particularly showy or "chops"-intensive, his single-string solos and emotion-evoking string bends have become his trademark. He has had a powerful influence on virtually every electric blues guitarist who came after him, including Buddy Guy, Freddie King, Albert King, and Otis Rush. His effect on rock 'n' roll guitar is inestimable also, as he influenced everyone from Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, and Jimmy Page to Johnny Winter, Billy Gibbons, and Stevie Ray Vaughan. More than any other individual, B.B. King is responsible for bringing the blues into music's mainstream.

BLUES AND THE BASS

For hundreds of years, musicians have realized the importance and the necessity of having a bass in their musical groups. In the early days of the modern symphony orchestra, the double bass was created because the cellos alone couldn't provide enough bottom end and needed their lines doubled an octave lower (hence the term "double bass"). In later years, people would do all kinds of things to satisfy the need for having a bass voice in the band, and the blues was no exception.

One popular type of ensemble in the 1920s was the "jug band." Jug bands came in all varieties of size and instrumentation, though they nearly always included a harmonica or kazoo as the lead melodic voice, along with an assortment of stringed instruments. Providing the low end, these bands had at least one member blowing a bass line across the top of a jug, which became sort of a poor man's tuba. (Even when resources were scarce, "bass" players have always made do by whatever means were available—champs, all the way!)

In most types of music, bass players have traditionally blended into the woodwork, playing the role of the ever-loyal and supportive musical servant, laying the foundation for the frontliners, the stars, the "big names." The contributions of bass players have always been necessary, though seldom recognized or appreciated in the early days, often rendering them victims of obscurity. On some of the old recordings, the bass is barely audible. Still, if you look really hard, you can identify some of the bass players from the early days, like Bill Johnson, who played with King Oliver's Dixieland Band in the 1920s, and Maurice Rayman, who supplied the bottom for Jan Savitt and His Top Hatters, one of the early shuffle bands in the '30s.

One of the earliest and most influential blues bands, the Blue Devils, was led by a bass player, Walter Page. Formed in 1925, the Blue Devils, which included such notables as Lester Young, Count Basie, and Jimmy Rushing, were known for their hard-swinging blues style. As a bass player, Page was held in high esteem for his solid time feel and his contribution to the transition from Dixieland to swing. He became a member of one of jazz's most noted rhythm sections in Count Basie's big band. As a musician, Walter Page was a key player in the evolution of blues bass.

We bassists can claim another true blues master as one of us. Willie Dixon, whose bass lines became the standard in the blues and R&B worlds, helped create an alliance between blues and rock 'n' roll. A key player in the rock 'n' roll revolution, Willie played bass on lots of Chuck Berry records in the '50s and '60s.

In addition to his bass playing abilities, Willie Dixon was known as a major composer, producer, arranger, and session player. He also was a bandleader for Chess Records in the 1950s and early '60s. Dixon had more influence on post-war Chicago blues than anybody else, with the exception of Muddy Waters. A most prolific songwriter, Dixon penned tunes for Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and Sonny Boy Williamson (II). In fact, some of his best songs were also recorded by major rock groups, including Cream, Led Zeppelin, and the Doors. Willie made one of the strongest tributes to the impact of the blues in his autobiography, where he said, "The blues are the roots, and the other musics are the fruits..." Now who's going to argue with that?

Throughout the twentieth century, virtually all varieties of music have been blessed with a legacy of great bass players. A list of who's who among notable bassists who have influenced the blues dates back for generations.

The jazz world gave us Jimmy Blanton, Scott LaFaro, and Paul Chambers, all of whom could play the blues with phenomenal style and feel. Ray Brown, another jazz legend, is still going strong, and young Christian McBride, a relative newcomer, has been scaring them all to death since his arrival on the scene a few short years ago.

Closer to pure blues, Big Crawford took care of business in the Muddy Waters band back in its heyday. More recently, a number of Chicago bassists have been upholding that city's reputation for blues. Greg Rzab attained a solid reputation as a blues bassist through his work with Buddy Guy; Johnny B. Gayden, for his work with Albert Collins; and Noel Neal for his work with James Cotton. It's hard to hear the name Roscoe Beck without thinking of blues bass. Beck, who grew up in New York and Texas, earned his stripes in the bands of Robben Ford and Eric Johnson, among others.

Bassists who are associated with more urban, R&B kinds of grooves include Jerry Jemmott, Chuck Rainey, Motown king James Jamerson, and funkmeister Larry Graham. All have been influenced by the blues and, in turn, inspired other blues bass players.

Rock 'n' roll has provided its share of bassists whose bands were important to perpetuating the blues, including Englishmen Chas Chandler of the Animals, John McVie of Fleetwood Mac, Jack Bruce of Cream, and John Paul Jones of Led Zeppelin. Not to be outdone, the U.S. has done its share of breeding good bass players to keep the blues alive and well. Donald "Duck" Dunn played a major role as a blues bassist through his work with Booker T. & the MGs in Memphis, as did Larry Taylor with Canned Heat on the West Coast. Out of Texas came Dusty Hill of ZZ Top, Keith Ferguson of the Fabulous Thunderbirds, and Tommy Shannon, best known for his work with Stevie Ray Vaughan and Johnny Winter. Among the bassists in the Allman Brothers Band were Allen Woody and, more recently, the fiery young hotshot Oteill Burbridge, who can tear up everything from Southern boogie, funk, and bebop to fusion and—oh, yes—the blues.

The bass is light years ahead of where it was when it was originally developed. The names presented here comprise but a short list of the influential bottom-people who have given so much to the blues and who have had a profound influence on the bass.

THE BLUES TODAY

Since its inception, the blues has undergone growth spurts, transformations, and detours, like a tree branching out in several directions at once. But the foundation of the tree is strong and continues to provide the roots for the style's development. There are those who argue that the last significant development in the blues was the advent of the electric guitar, some fifty years ago. At the same time, there are traditionalists, purists, who keep striving to pay homage to the lone singer with the guitar, building on that deep-rooted tradition.

The fact is, the blues is more popular today than it has ever been, including during the revival times in the '60s and '80s. Blues festivals are prevalent throughout the U.S, as well as overseas. Scores of record labels carry substantial blues catalogs, including Alligator, Chess, and Rounder, in addition to the "biggies" like BMG, Capitol-EMI, Warner Bros., and so many others. Wherever you live, you can probably find a radio show or two (or more) devoted strictly to the blues. And nowadays, there are *jillions* of web sites where you can find out about practically anything and anybody in the world of blues.

The blues has changed in many ways. The old songs from the cotton fields have given way to songs that reflect current conditions. We are so fortunate that Bessie Smith, Muddy Waters, and Stevie Ray Vaughan have been immortalized on record. Nowadays, the young lions like Colin James, Kenny Wayne Shepherd, and Jonny Lang are leaving their own legacies on the blues tradition. The blues continues to tell it like it is, through its truth, its wisdom, and its deeply-rooted emotional core. Whether it's Delta, Chicago, jazz, boogie woogie, R&B, or rock 'n' roll, it's still the blues. It all started with the blues...

CHAPTER 2
Blues Basics

In Chapter 1, we traced the development of the blues from an historical and cultural perspective. We discussed the "importing" of the African slaves back in the 17th century and how the inception of the blues took place in the cotton fields of the deep South. We described the evolution of the blues over the years, and how it was continuously influenced by the various societies to which it migrated throughout the land.

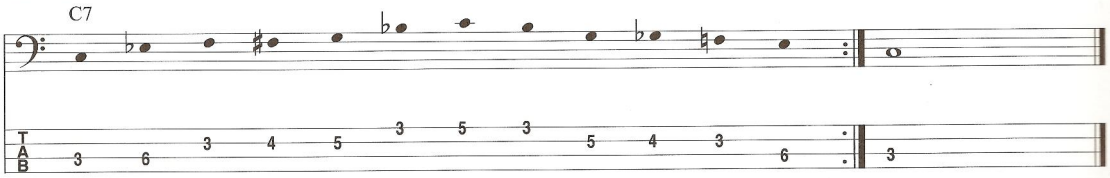
In this chapter, we'll get into the music itself: what is meant when one refers to "a blues" and how it evolved musically. Keep in mind the scenario during the earliest days of the formation of the blues. The slaves were hard at work, the conditions were miserable, and the situation was hopeless. Fully aware they would never return to their homeland, they cried out in woe and despair, and sang about getting into heaven, the only thing they had to look forward to.

In the meantime, as they worked and they sang, the slaves developed a rhythm reminiscent of the rhythms of their African home, leading to new forms of expression and new means of communicating with one another. From this expression came the field holler, a sort of musical shout, rising and falling in pitch. The field holler, in turn, was answered by a shout from elsewhere in the field, inciting a call-and-response, a musical dialogue. The common belief is that this expression developed into the work song and the work songs evolved into the blues—songs of disheartenment, struggle, and hopelessness.

THE BLUES SCALE

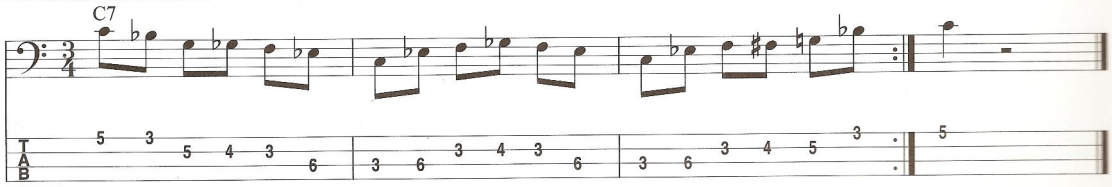
Musical analysis of the blues brings to light several observations. One feature pertains to the notes themselves. A typical blues line contains "blue notes," or flatted notes—generally the 3rd, the 5th, and 7th degrees of a major scale. The result of these alterations is the blues scale, the essence of the blues sound. Try playing this scale on your bass:

Blues Scale

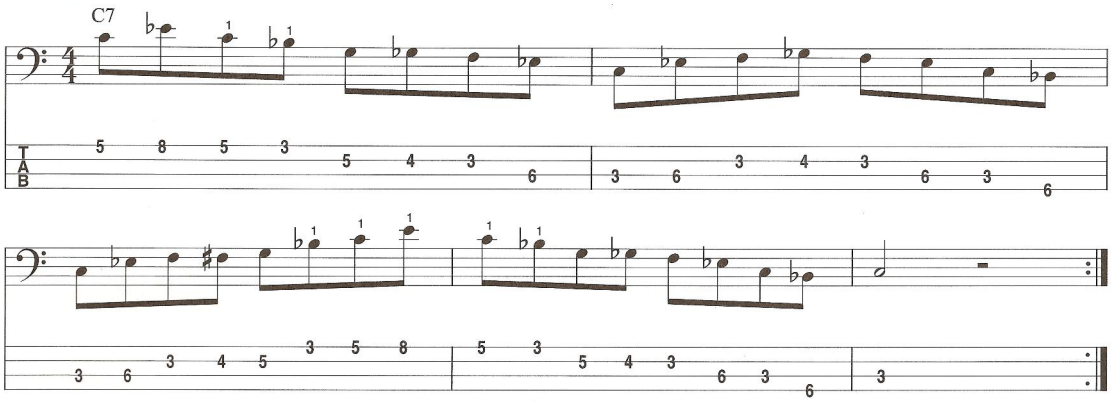


Now play these patterns based on the blues scale. Notice that these exercises are made up of the same six notes arranged in different configurations. For fun, see how many variations you can come up with. Get a music notebook and create your own blues "library of licks." You'll enjoy playing these patterns, and you'll build strength in your hands and develop some good chops. And you'll be playing the blues! Try them in some other keys (try them in all keys!). With diligent practice, there is no limit to the number of configurations you can come up with.

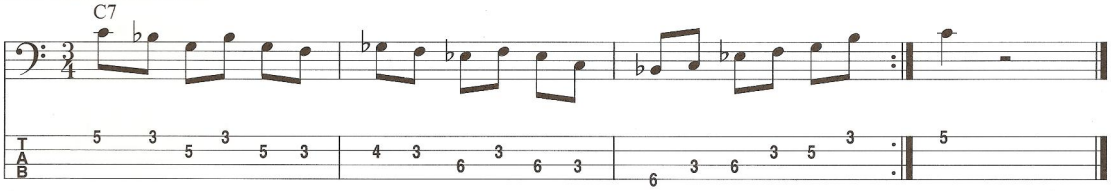
Blues Scale Exercise No. 1



Blues Scale Exercise No. 2



Blues Scale Exercise No. 3



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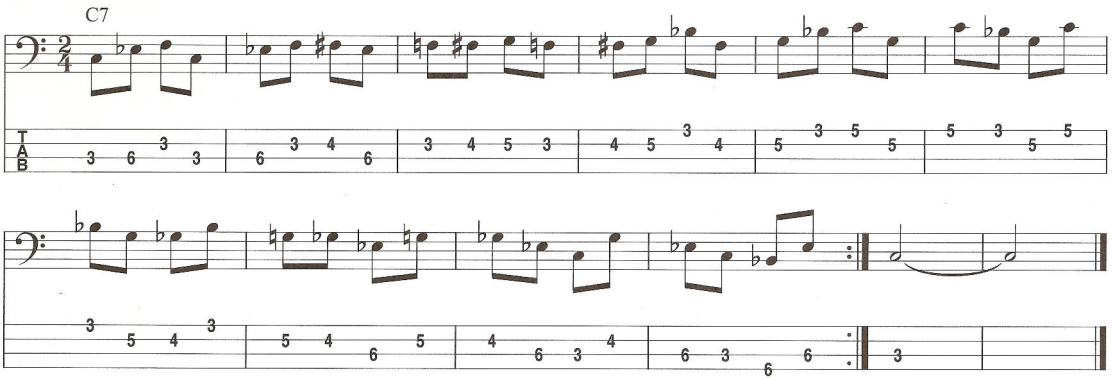

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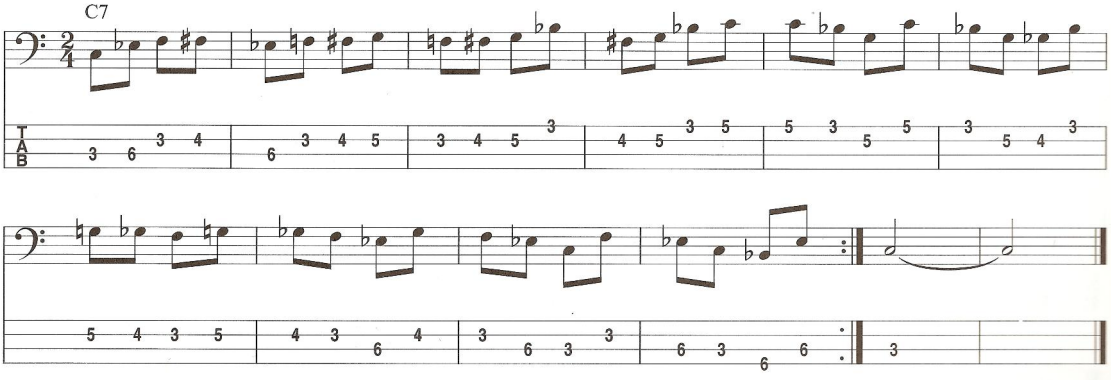


TWELVE-BAR BLUES

Another feature of the blues is in the structure of the blues song. The field hollers, along with the practice of call-and-response, culminated into the popular twelve-bar blues form. Most blues songs begin with a simple statement, setting up a situation, often describing some sort of problem:

Well, they call it the blues, there ain't nothin' quite as bad.

This statement is generally four bars long. In your typical, "classic" blues, the statement is repeated for another four bars.

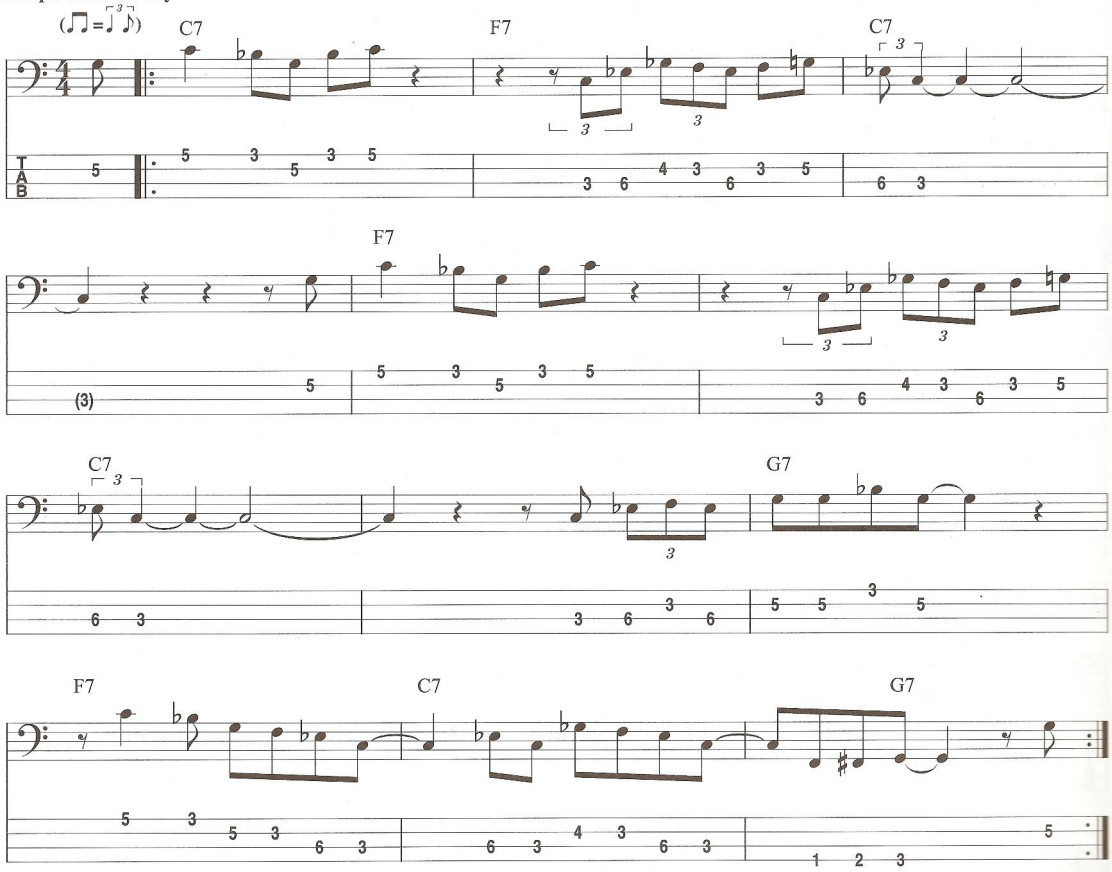
Well, they call it the blues, there ain't nothin' quite as bad.

The next phrase is in response to the first statement, usually giving a reason for the problem or elaborating on it further.

Since my baby up and left me, I'm feelin' oh so very sad.

Following is an example of a typical blues melody. Notice the use of blue notes (flatted 3rd, 5th, and/or 7th), statement–repeated statement–response, and the standard twelve-bar length.

Sample Blues Melody

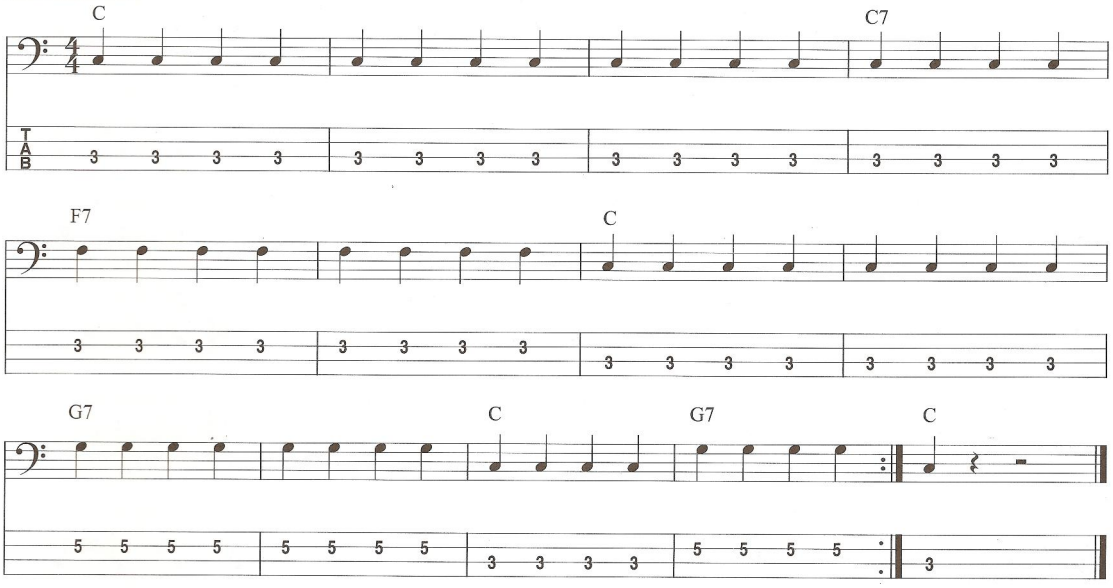


BLUES PROGRESSIONS

Notice also, in our example, the chord progression. Throughout the course of music history (including church music, classical music, etc.), chord progressions have always been derived from voice leading. In other words, the melody came before the harmony and, therefore, determined the chords

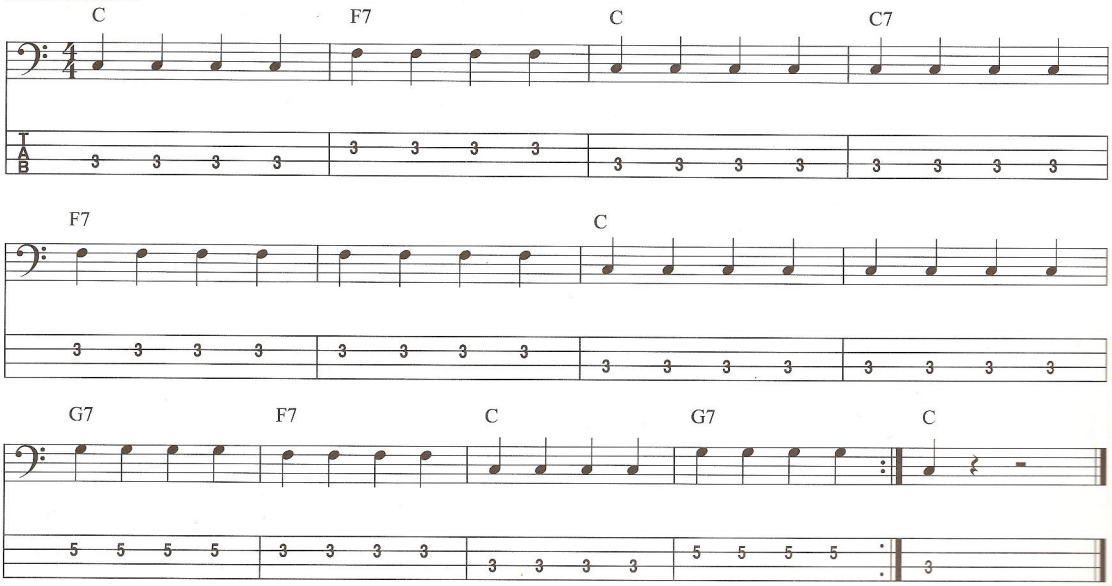
and the chord progression. The same rule applies to the blues. The field hollers and the work songs had come to follow a somewhat standard pattern. Therefore, as the blues form began to evolve, the chord progression evolved along with it, helping to create what has become known as the standard twelve-bar blues. Here is an example of a twelve-bar blues progression in its simplest form:

Blues Form No. 1

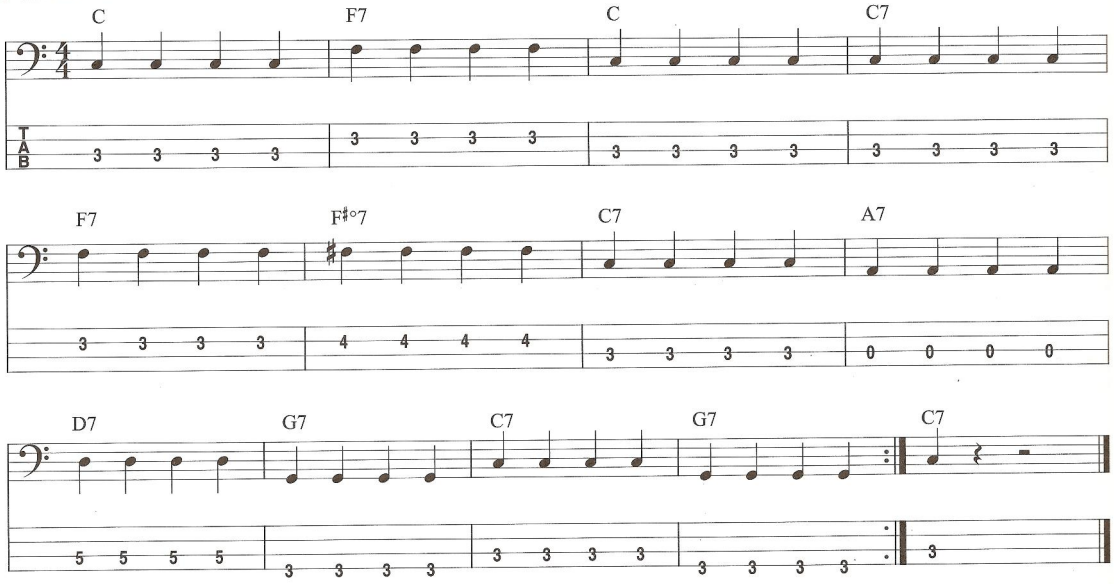


Below are some other variations of blues progressions that are common. Before we get into any real blues bass lines, or combine melody and harmony, I want you to focus on the chord progression of the blues. Practice playing Blues Forms 1-8 slowly and deliberately. Concentrate on the sound of the chord progressions and on playing these examples in perfect time. There's no reason you shouldn't make them feel good, too. Having a friend play the chords on the piano or guitar will be a big help. Maybe you can do that yourself into a tape recorder. Make sure you use a metronome, too.

Blues Form No. 2



Blues Form No. 3



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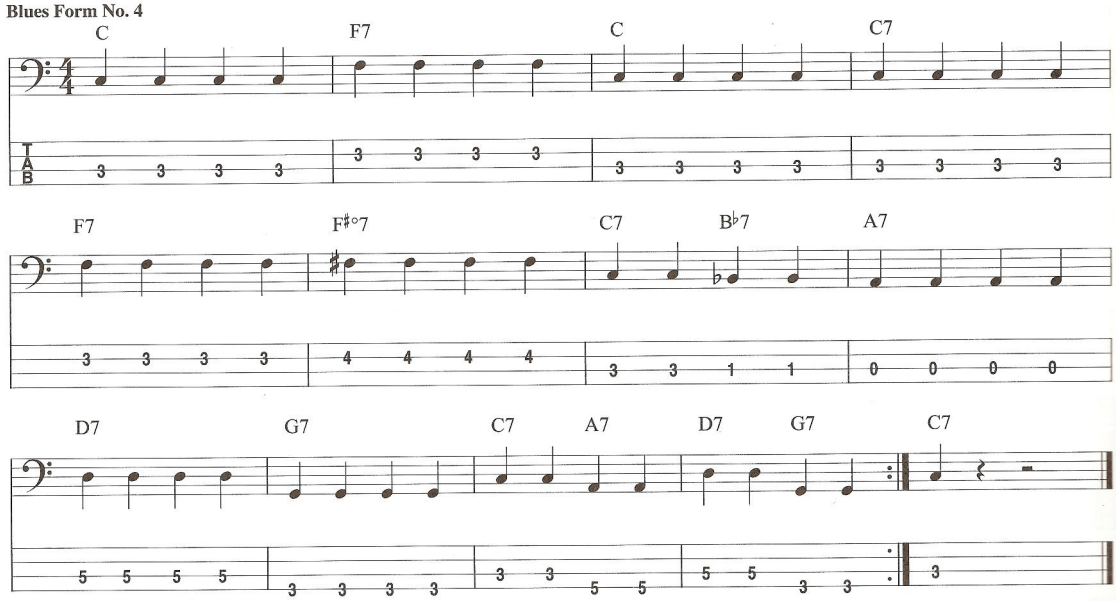
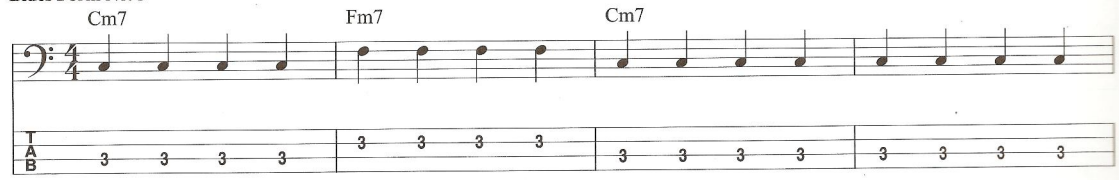
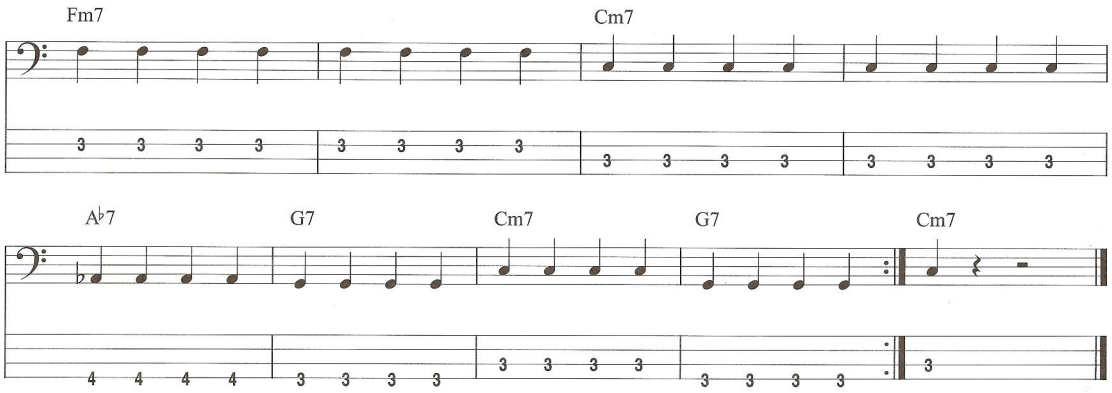
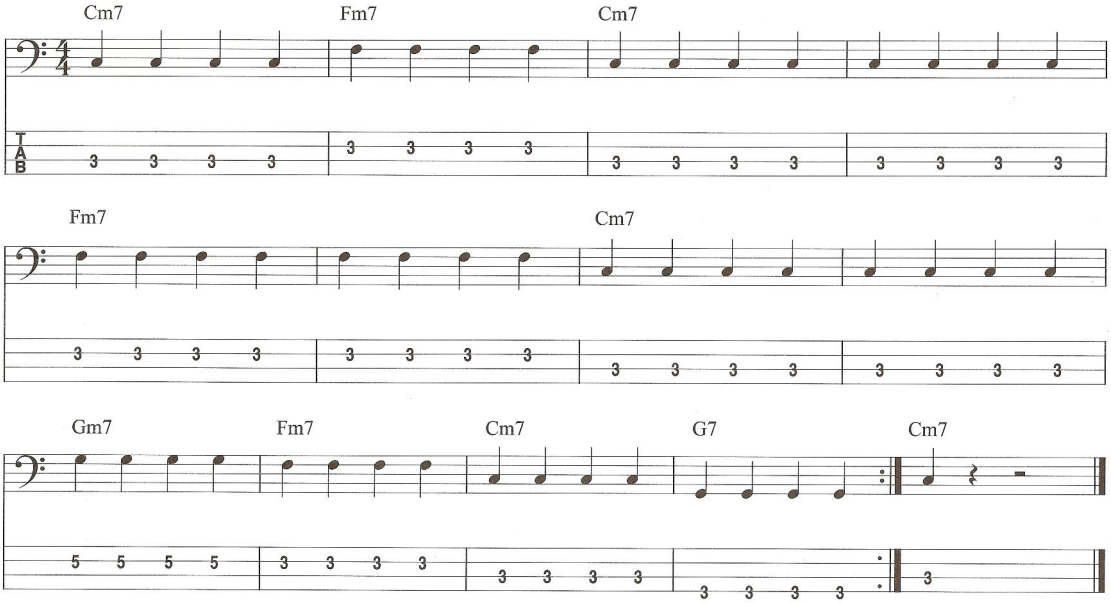


Blues Form No. 5

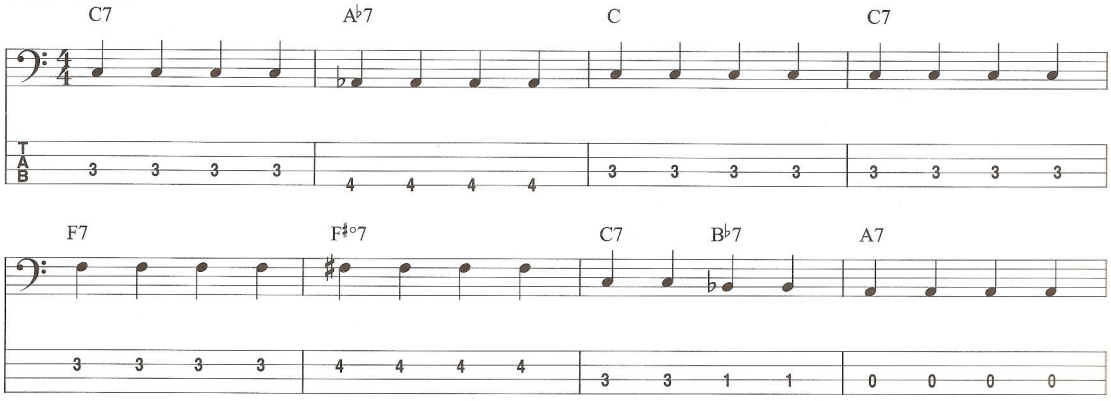


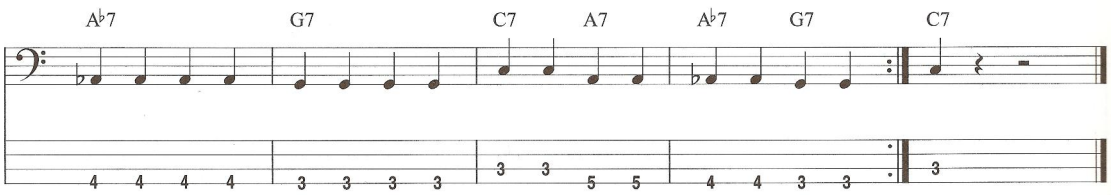


Blues Form No. 6

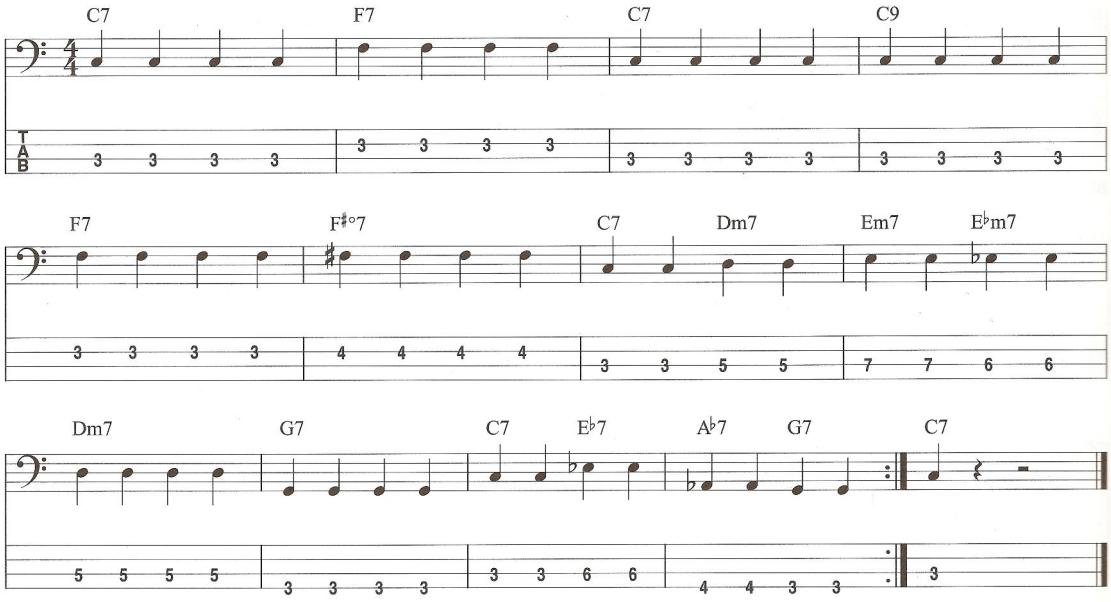


Blues Form No. 7





Blues Form No. 8



TAGS & TURNAROUNDS

A couple other features that have come into widespread use in playing the blues are "tags" and "turnarounds."

A *tag* is simply a section, generally four bars, that's repeated in order to prolong the blues, often to build excitement prior to the ending. In a live situation, tags can sometimes go on practically forever. Singers and instrumentalists alike use tags all the time.

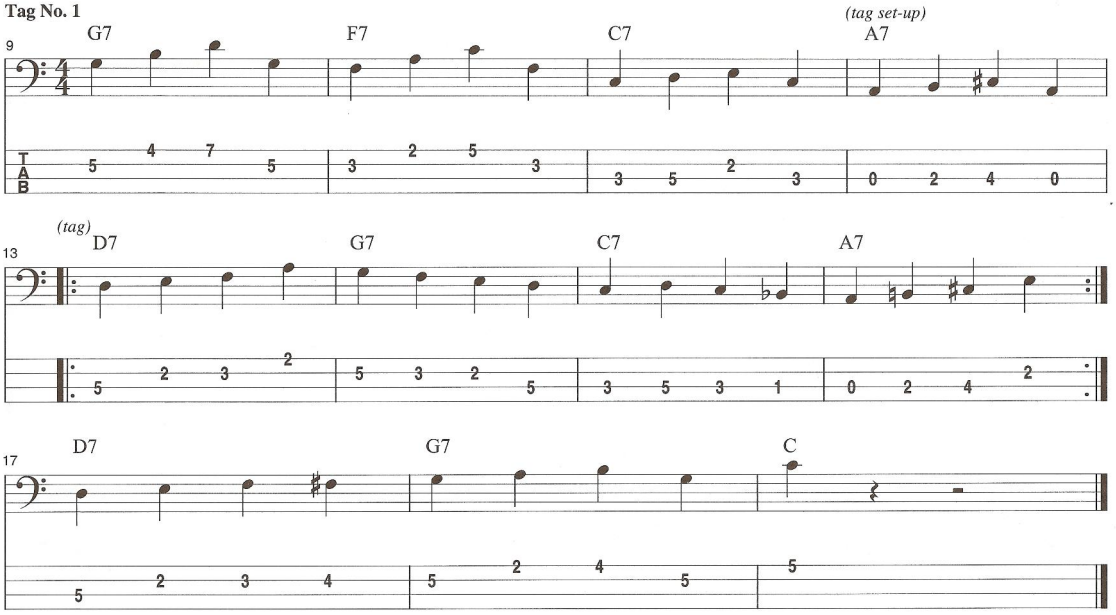
A typical performance (live or recorded) will adhere to the following sequence of events:

1. introduction
2. melody (played or sung)
3. solos (generally the longest section, especially if it's a large band)
4. repetition of melody
5. ending

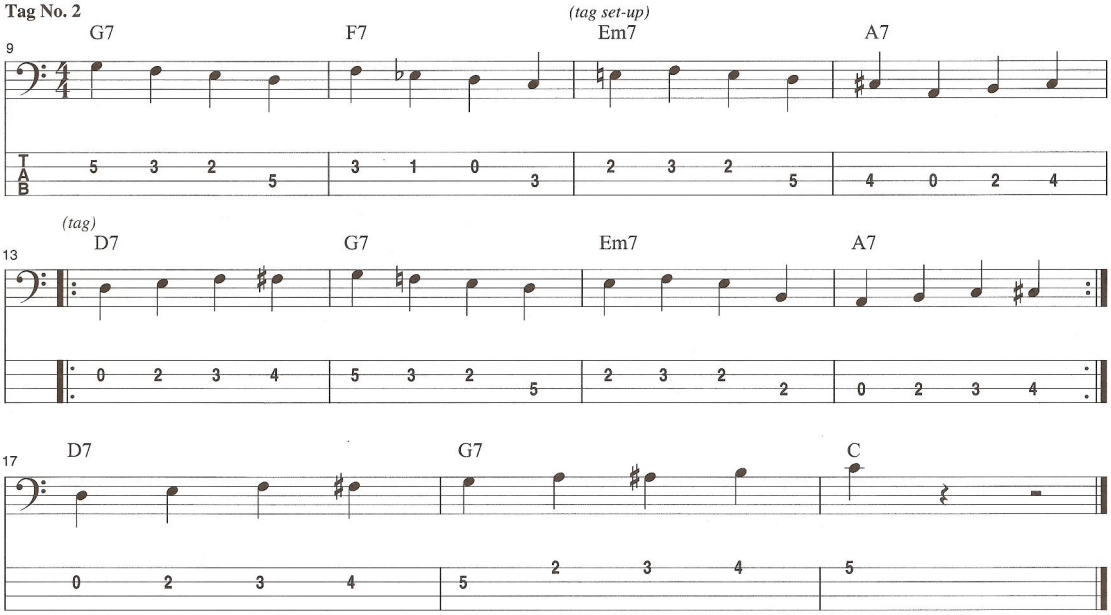
As a bass player, you need to be on your toes, watching (and listening!), especially after the reprise of the melody. If there is a tag, it's going to be just before the ending. Sometimes there's just no telling how long it will last. You need to be alert here, too, because you never know when the leader or singer will be ready to end the song. (Sometimes you may even wonder if they'll ever be ready!)

Here are a few tags to give you an idea of how they are used. The first four bars in each of the following selections represent the last four bars of a twelve-bar blues, in other words, measures 9–12. The tag section is played an indefinite number of times. See if you can get a friend to play the chords on guitar or keyboard so you can jam along. Make sure you play them in different keys, too.

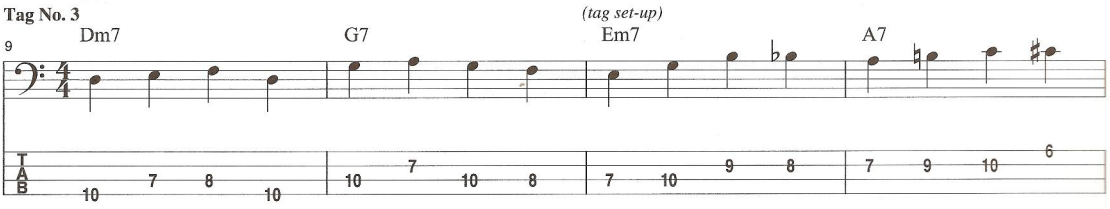
Tag No. 1

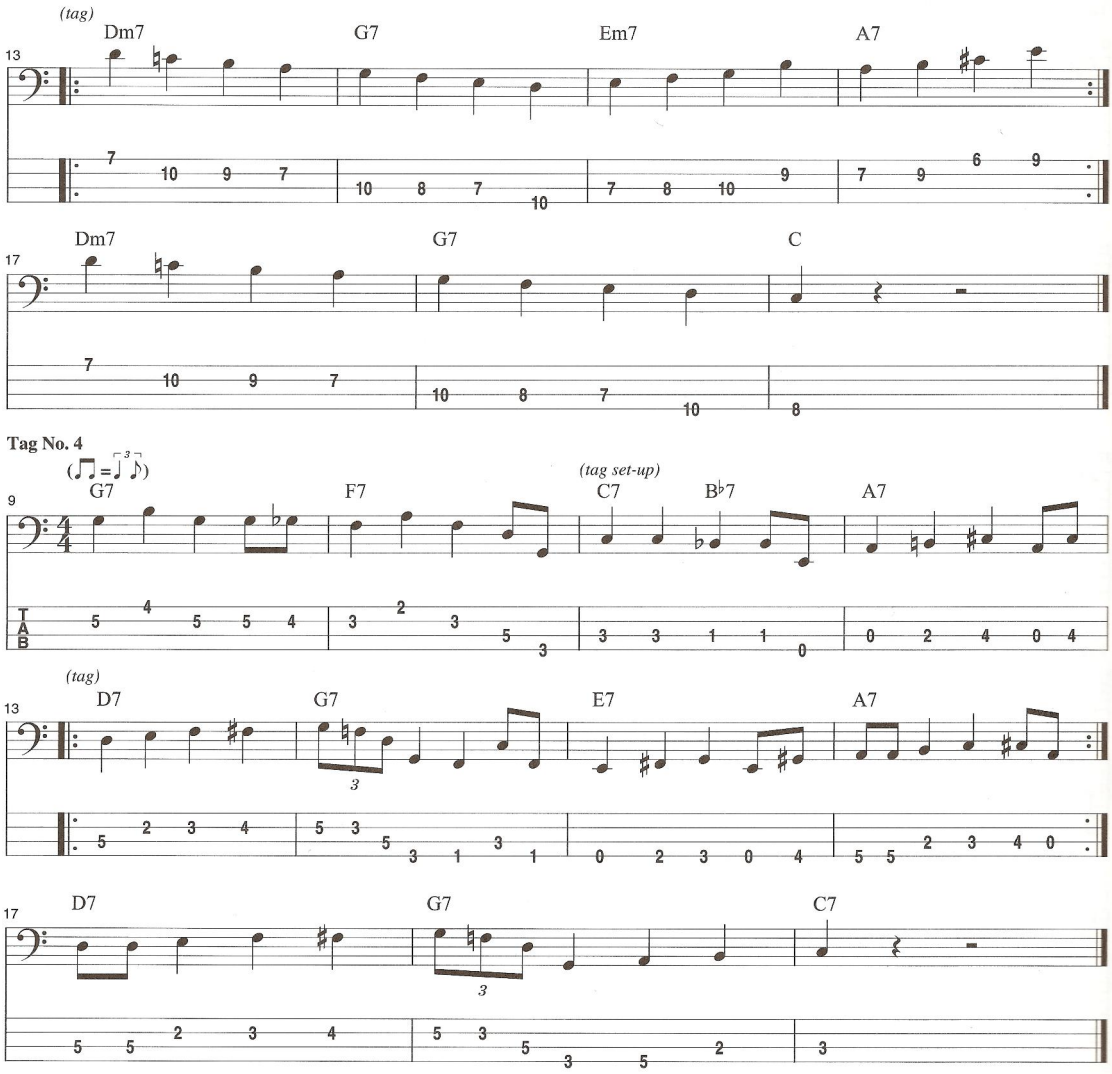


Tag No. 2



Tag No. 3

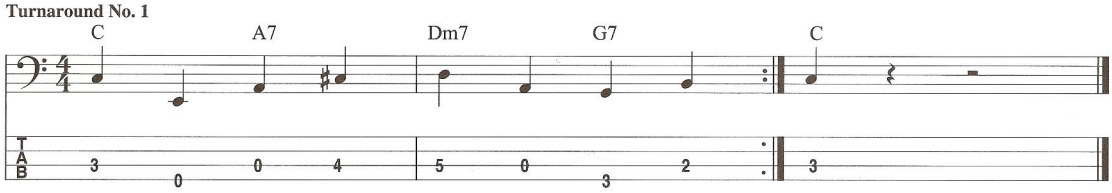




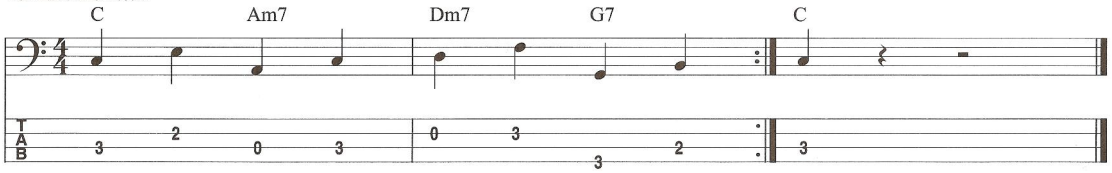
A *turnaround* is a device that provides harmonic movement in order to make the music more interesting. Its most practical application is at the end of a twelve-bar blues (bars 11 and 12), where playing only one or two chords could sound, shall we say, "uninspiring" (though there are plenty of cases where it works just fine, and is even preferable). In those instances where the music just needs something else to move it along, a turnaround perpetuates that harmonic movement, keeping the interest level high for the player and listener alike. A turnaround is actually a progression of chords that leads the music, harmonically, to the next section, usually the top of the form.* It is this function that gives the turnaround its name. Here are some examples of turnarounds.

* Remember: no matter how long a blues lasts, almost invariably, it is made up of the same twelve-bar form repeated over and over again.

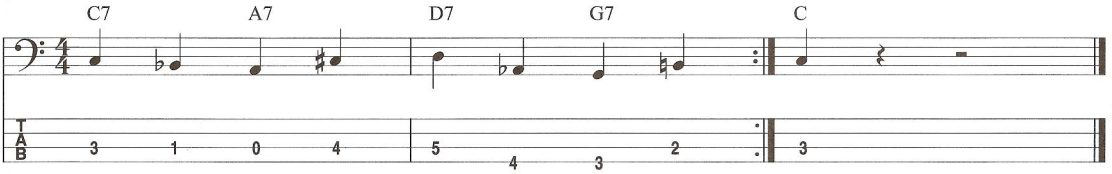
Turnaround No. 1



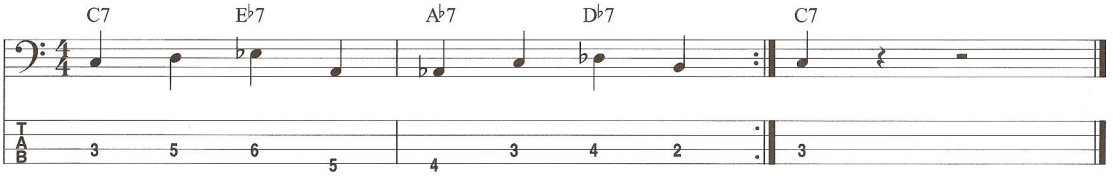
Turnaround No. 2



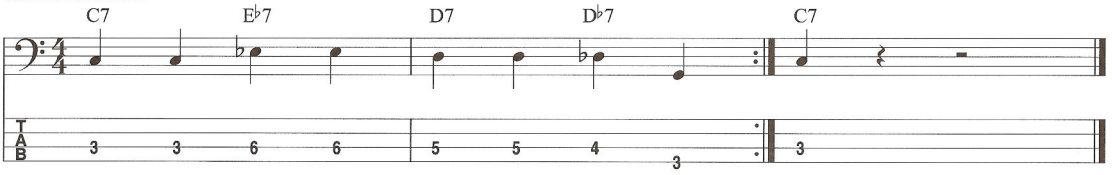
Turnaround No. 3



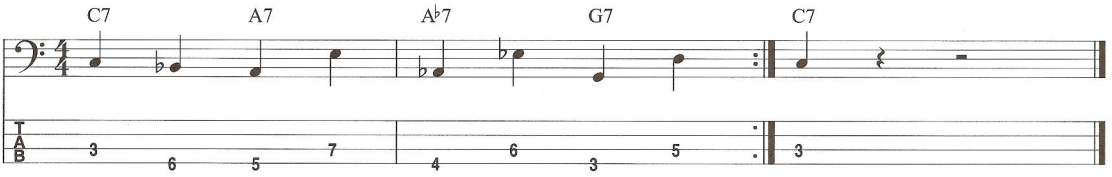
Turnaround No. 4



Turnaround No. 5



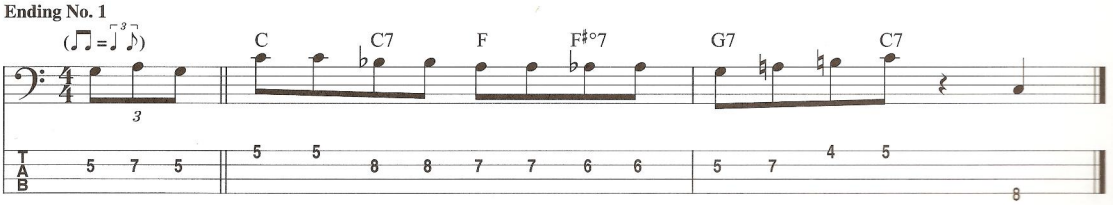
Turnaround No. 6



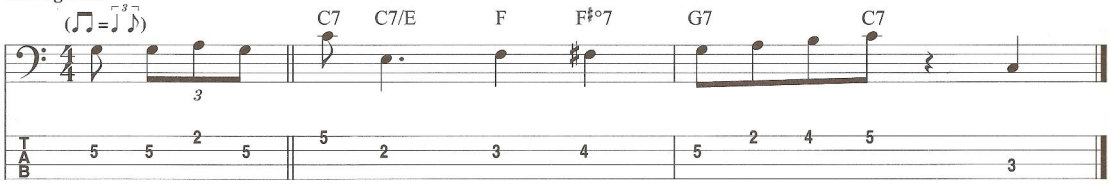
ENDINGS

All good things must come to an end, including a good blues. Here are a few common blues endings you should have in your vocabulary:

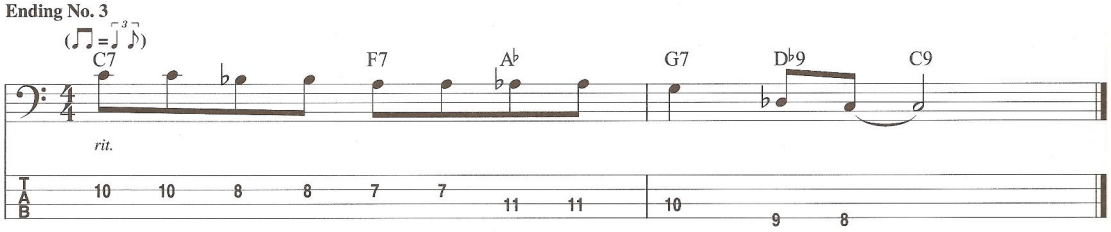
Ending No. 1



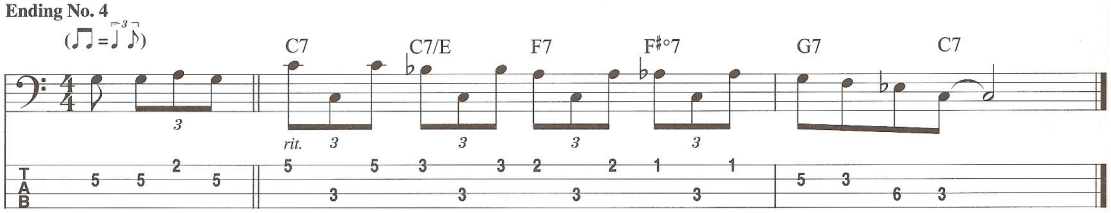
Ending No. 2



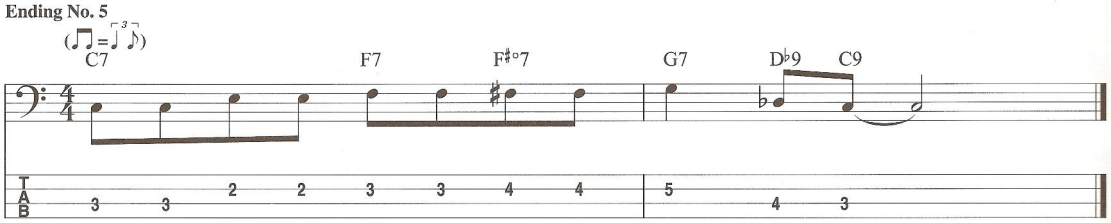
Ending No. 3



Ending No. 4



Ending No. 5



The more ways you practice these exercises, the better you'll understand them and the better you'll be able to play them. See how many ways you can vary the examples in this chapter. Writing down your own ideas in a music notebook will be an invaluable lesson for you, not only in creating your own blues library, but in helping your playing and reading abilities, too. Make sure you practice with a metronome or a drum machine, or better yet, a real live drummer (who keeps great time!). Always take your blues seriously.

Whenever you play the blues, even if it's an up-tempo "happy" blues, reserve a part somewhere inside yourself that holds sacred the history and the heritage of the blues. Reread Chapter 1 occasionally. Get a hold of some Bessie Smith or Robert Johnson recordings, and listen to them (I mean really listen to them!). Find some documentaries you can watch or some videos you can rent or buy. If you're going to play the blues, then you've got to get into it! When you're ready to move on, we'll start grooving in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3
The Grooves

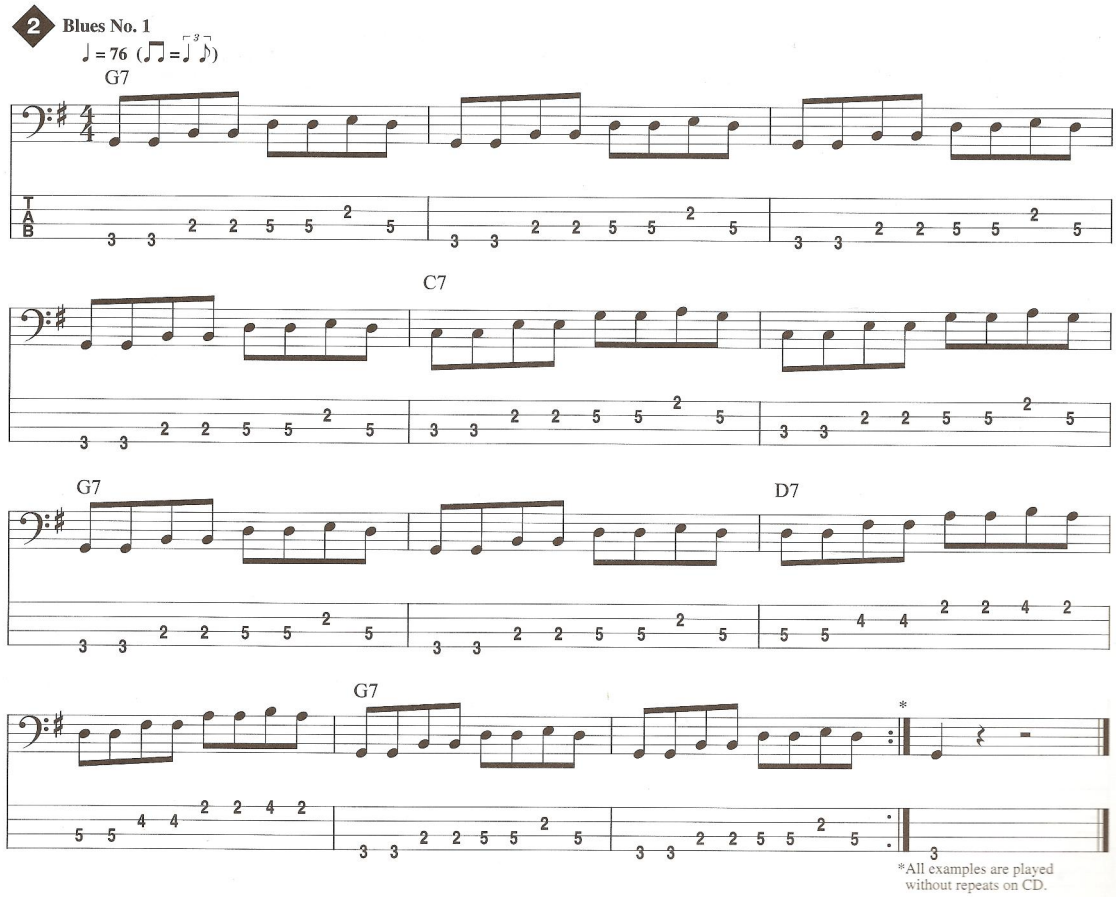
Here comes what it's all about, folks. As a bass player, the single most important factor that determines "if you is or if you ain't" is how well you lay down a blues groove. Remember, your role as a bass player is to groove with a great time feel. The other musicians (whether they know it or not, or whether they'll admit or not) will look to you to anchor them, to provide a steady foundation, and, along with the drummer, to set up the overall mood and feel of the music. Always think about what you can bring to the music, and not about how busy you can play, how many fancy fills you can throw in, or anything that detracts from your taking care of business. When in doubt, keep it simple!

All of the selections in Chapters 3 and 4 have been recorded on the CD that came with this book. To get started, you can listen to the interpretation and the feel of each example and play along with the CD. Ultimately, your goal is to be able to play any kind of blues groove, over and over, along with a band. It's best to practice with a drummer, or at least a metronome. Sure, the notes are important, but playing in perfect time and with a great time feel is paramount. Let's get started.

SOME BASIC BLUES FORMS

Selections 1-7 illustrate examples of some basic blues forms. They are derived from variations of arpeggios (broken chords) and are played with a triplet subdivision. Harmonically, they are perhaps the simplest of the blues forms.

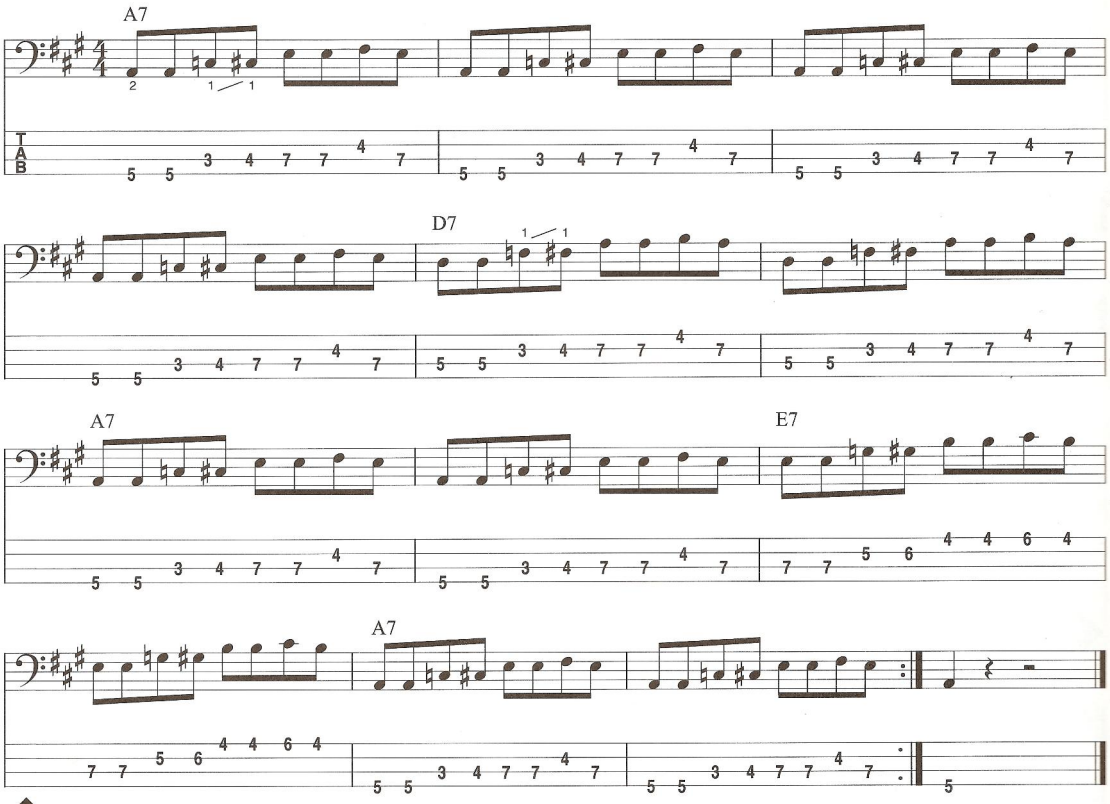
2 **Blues No. 1**



*All examples are played without repeats on CD.

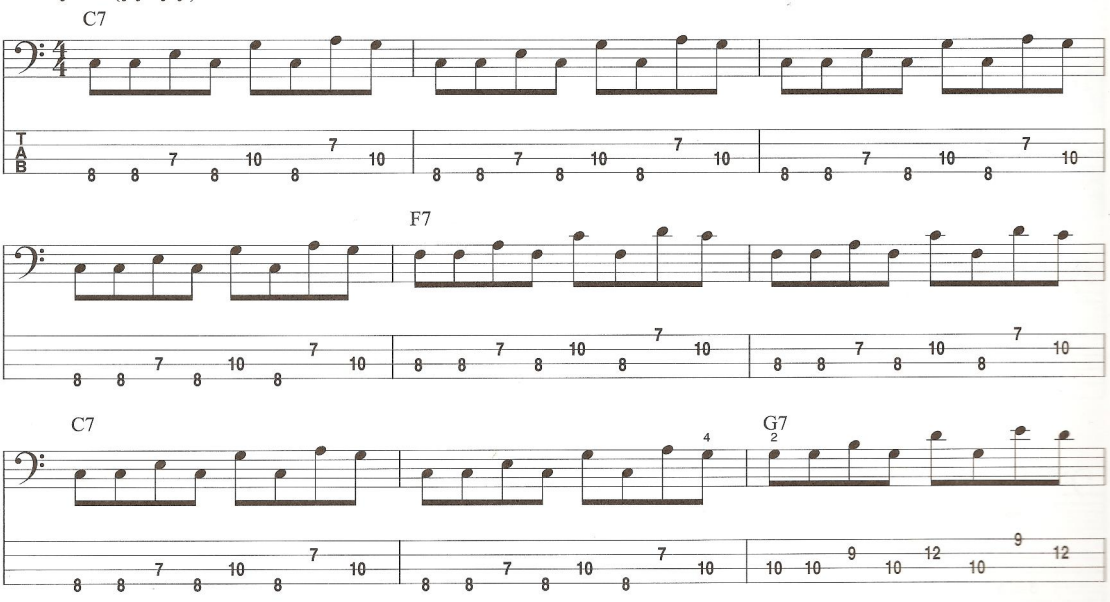
3 **Blues No. 2**

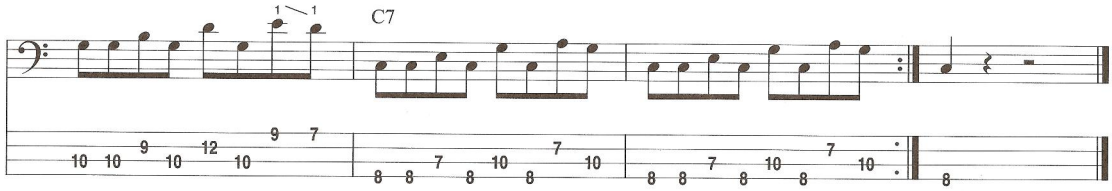
♩ = 76 (♫ = ♩³♪)



4 **Blues No. 3**

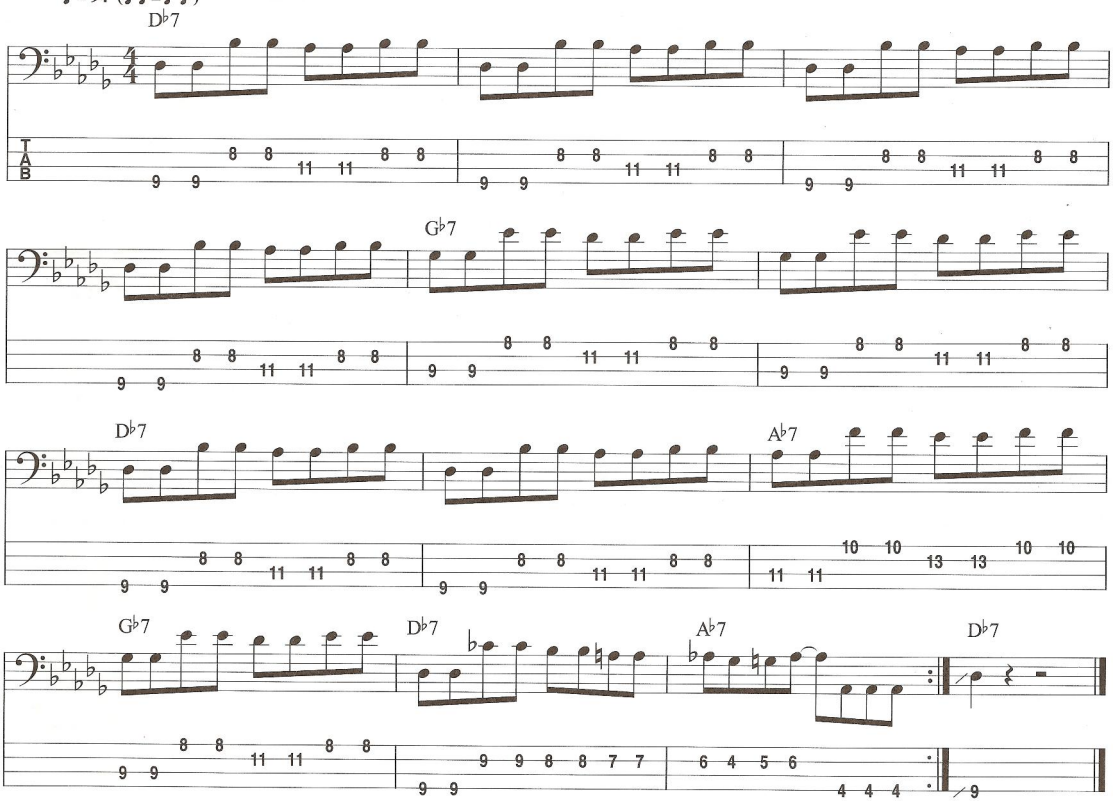
♩ = 76 (♫ = ♩³♪)





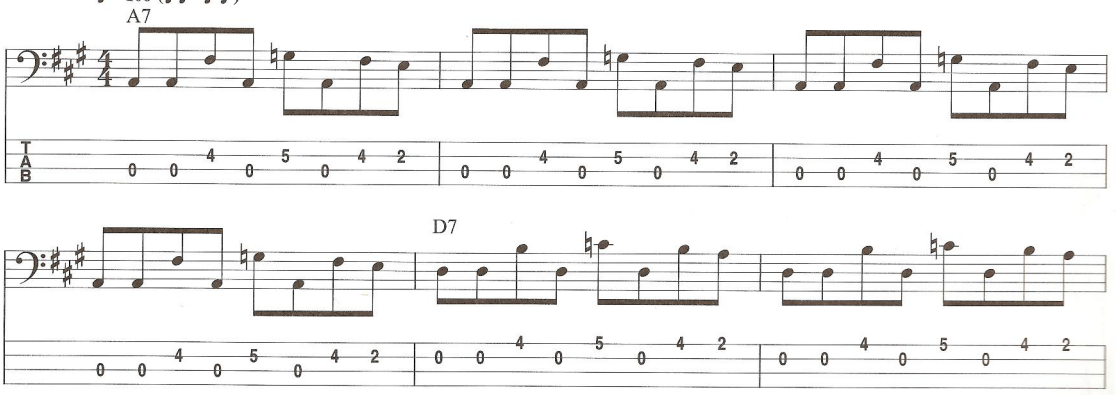
5 **Blues No. 4**

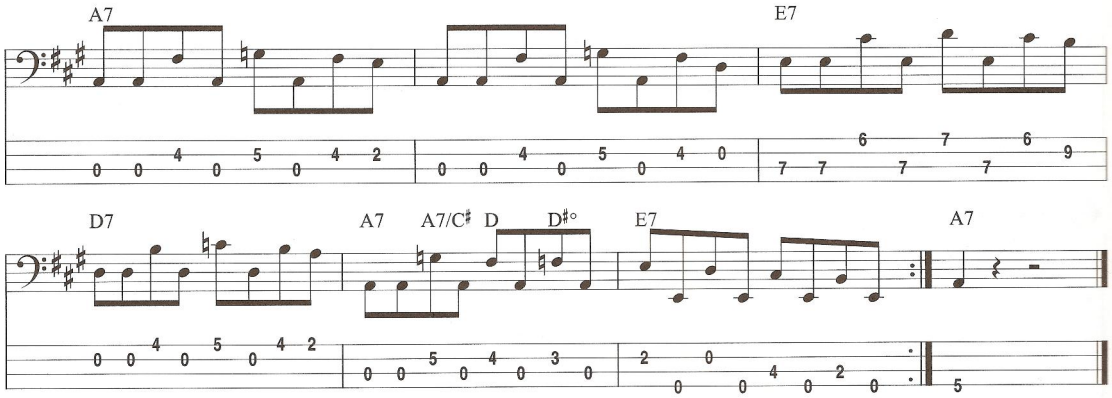
♩ = 94 (♫ = ♩³♪)



6 **Blues No. 5**

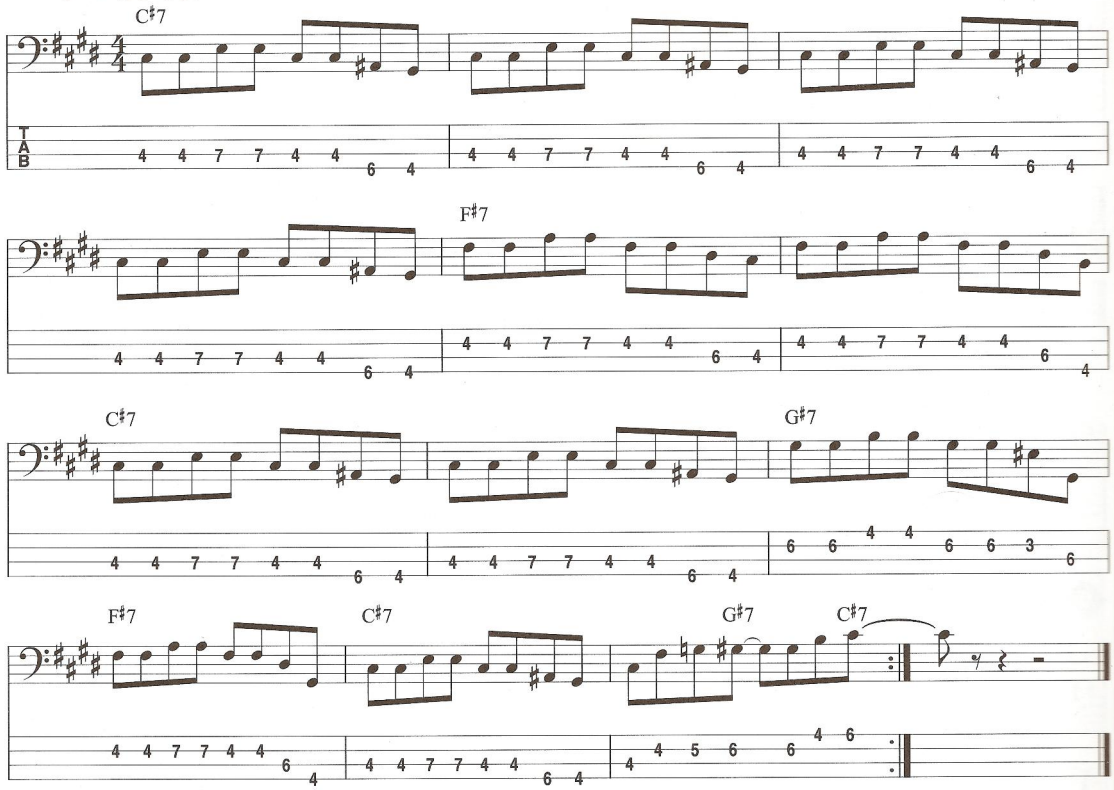
♩ = 106 (♫ = ♩³♪)





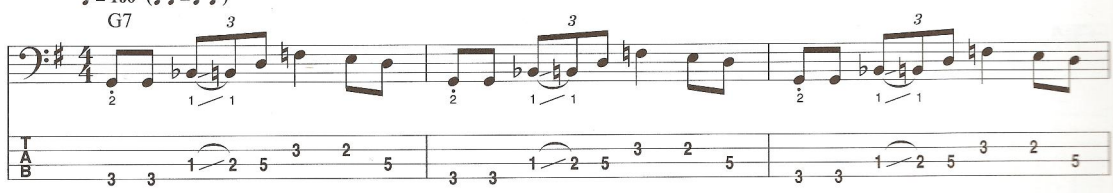
7 **Blues No. 6**

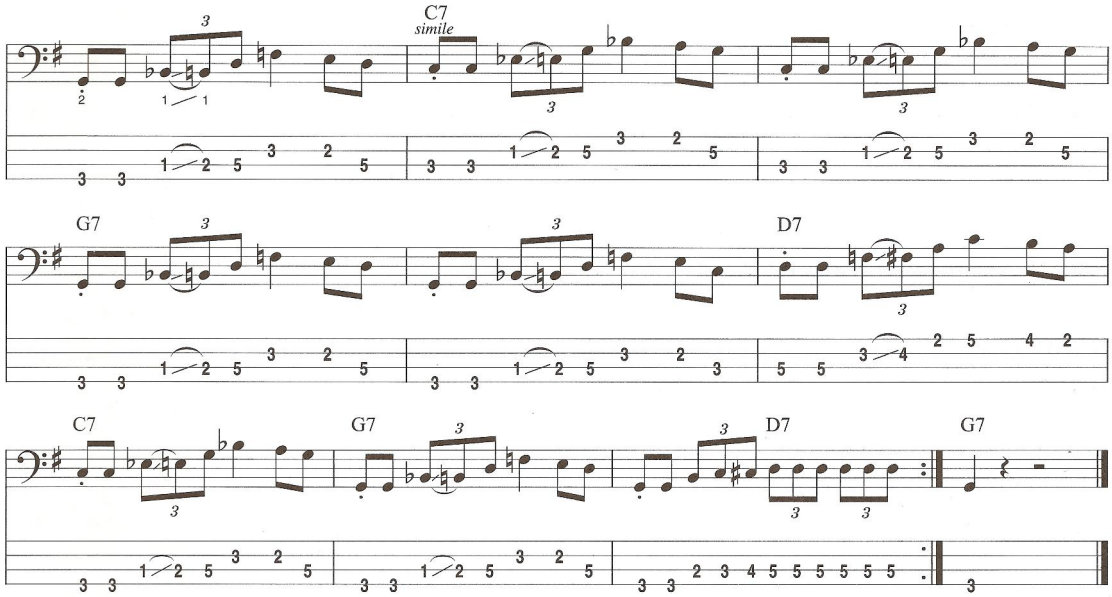
♩ = 90 (♫ = ♩³♪)



8 **Blues No. 7**

♩ = 100 (♫ = ♩³♪)



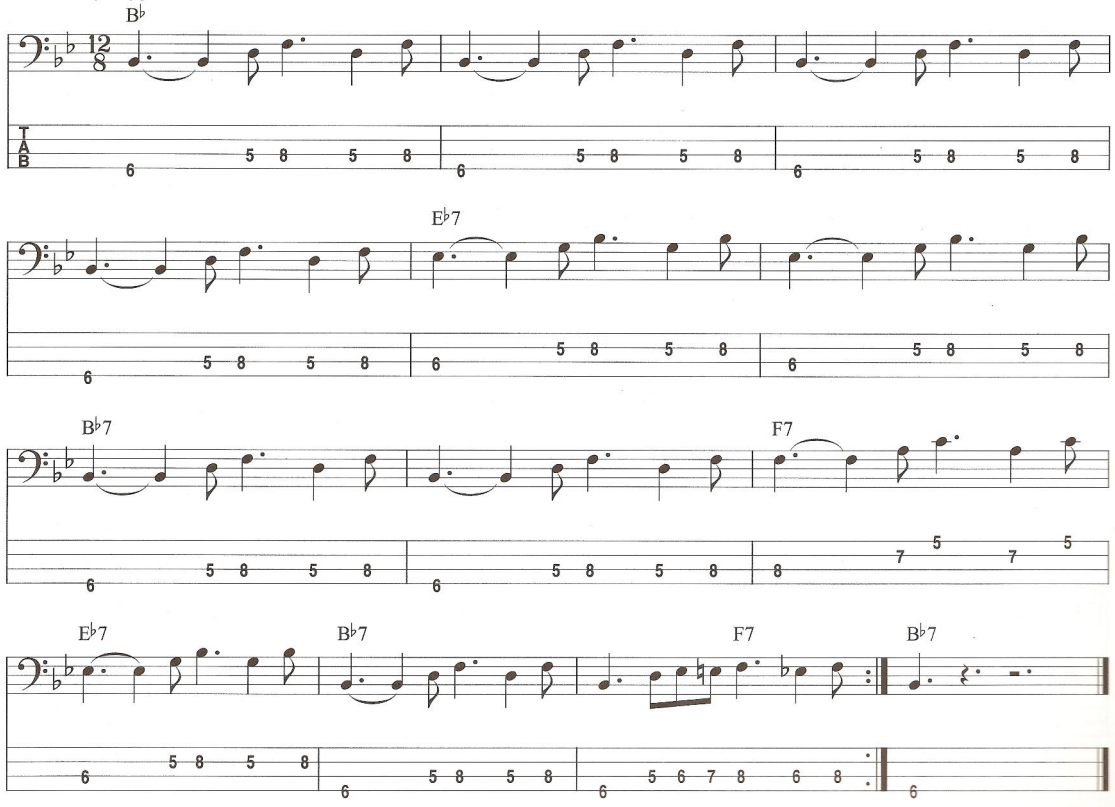


12/8 FEEL

Selections 8 and 9 are examples of the blues with a 12/8 feel. Notice how these patterns make use of arpeggiation, as well.

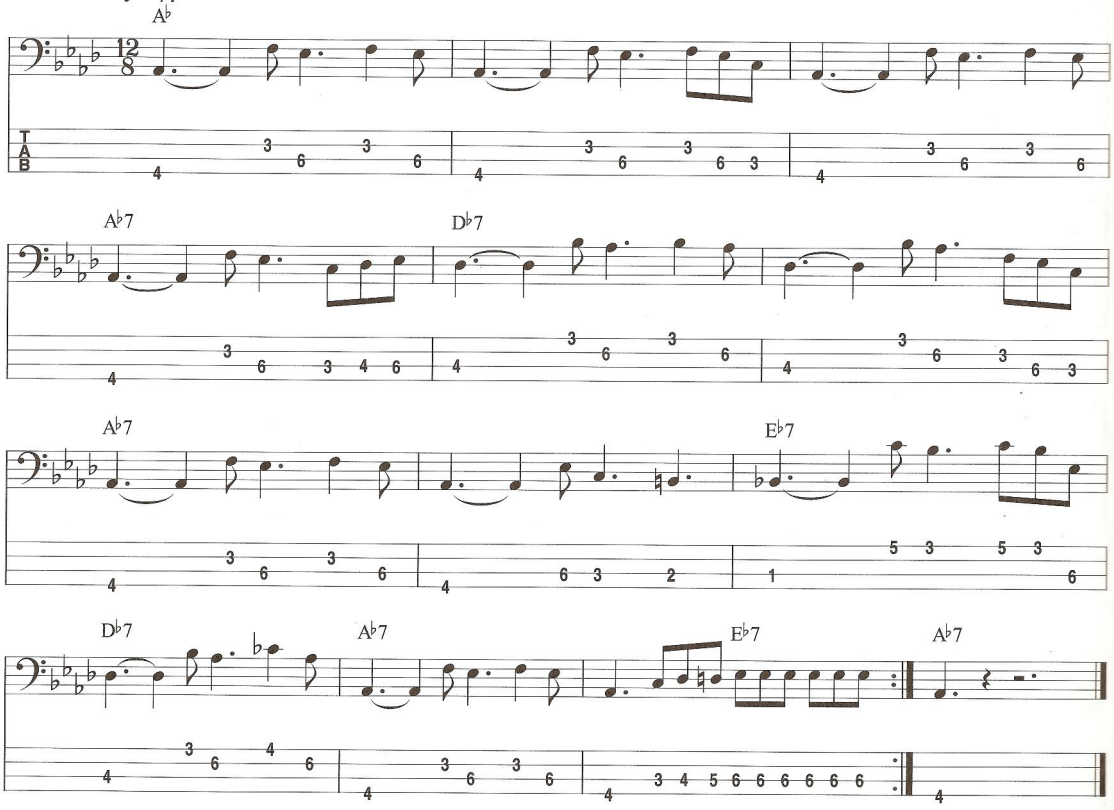
9 **Blues No. 8**

♩. = 74



10 **Blues No. 9**

♩. = 74

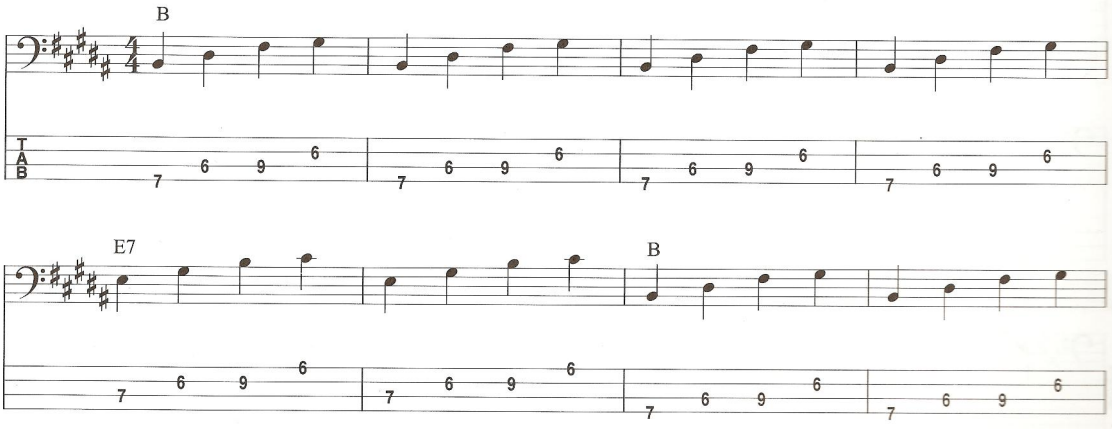


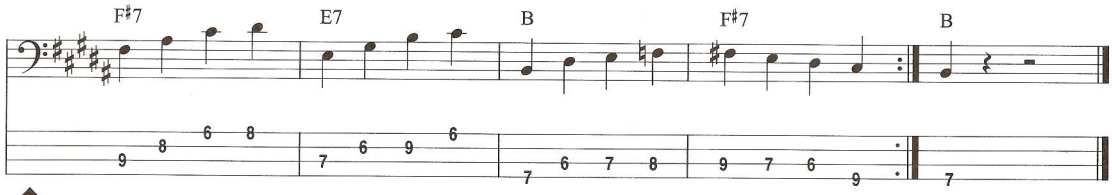
SWING/SHUFFLE

The following examples are in the swing/shuffle style, an extremely common blues feel, with a triplet subdivision. Notice how the chord progressions gradually become increasingly complex.

11 **Blues No. 10**

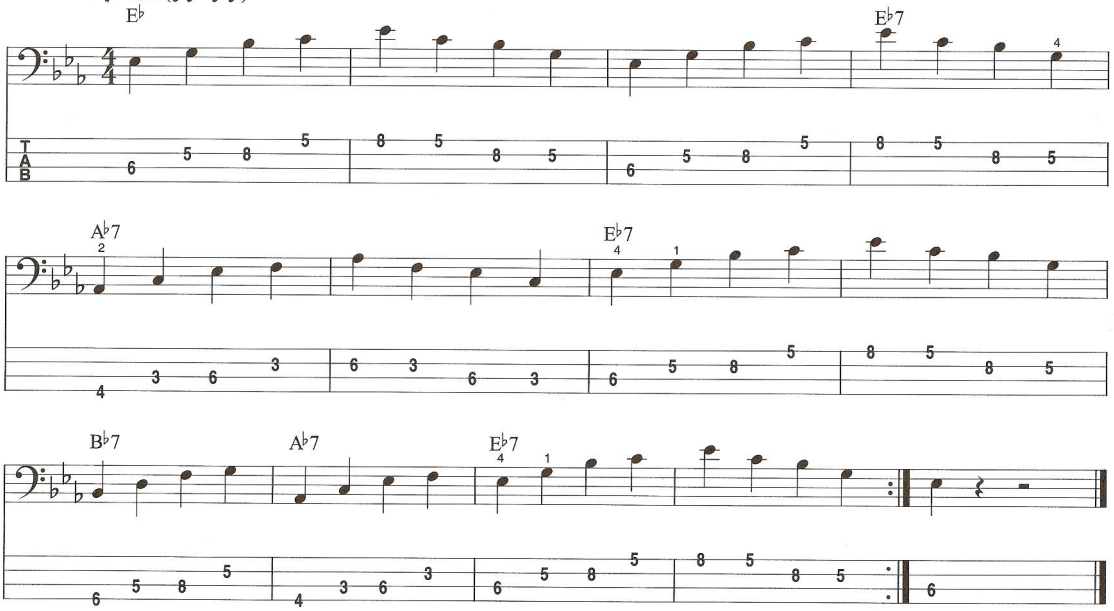
♩ = 162 (♫ = ♩³♪)





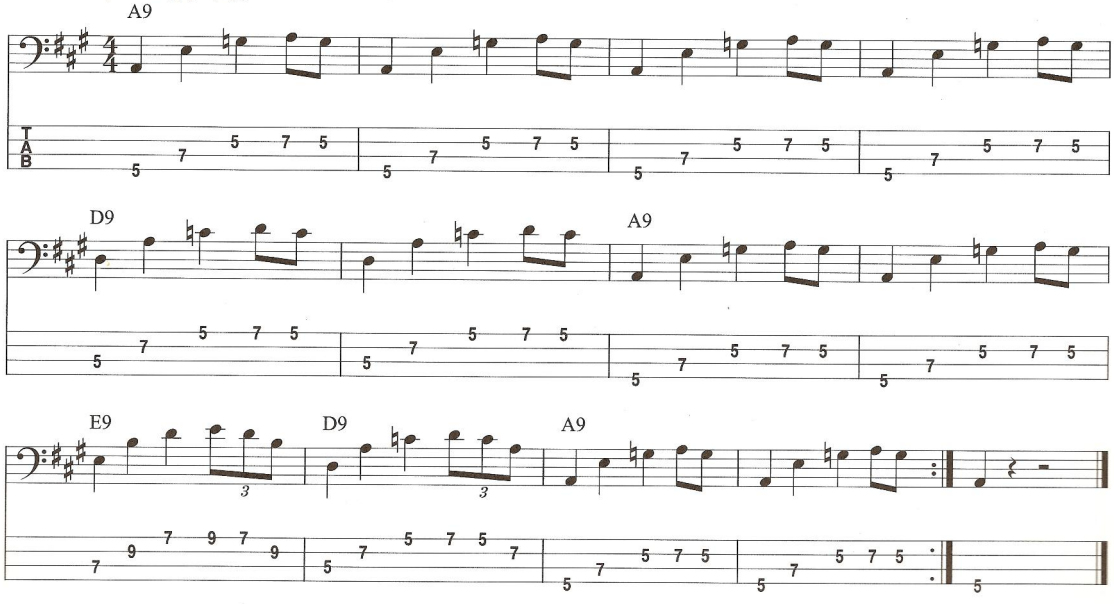
12 **Blues No. 11**

♩ = 162 (♫ = ♩³♪)



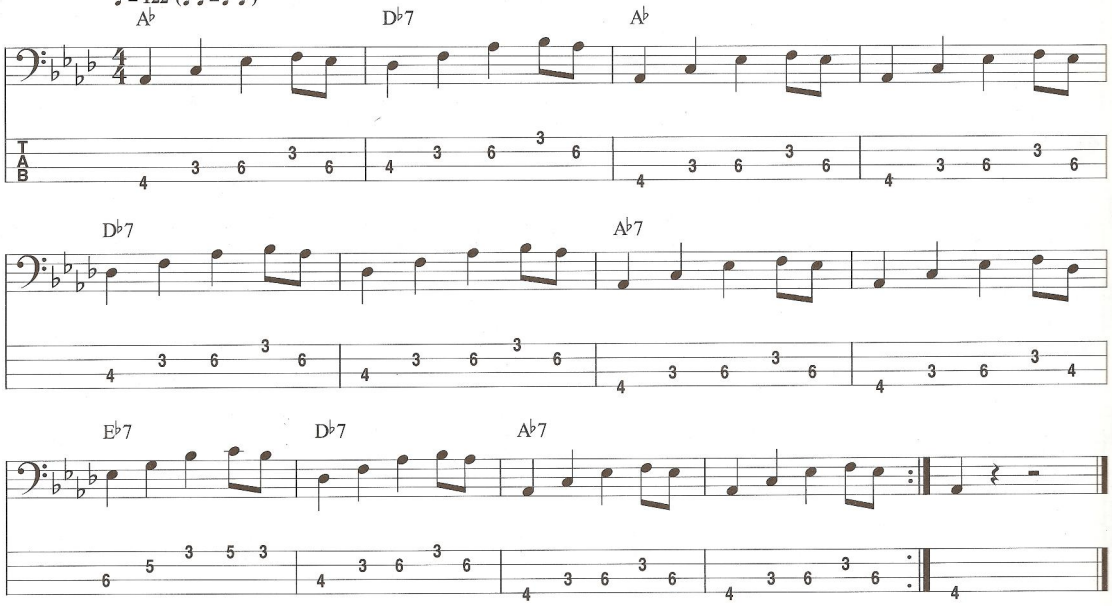
13 **Blues No. 12**

♩ = 146 (♫ = ♩³♪)



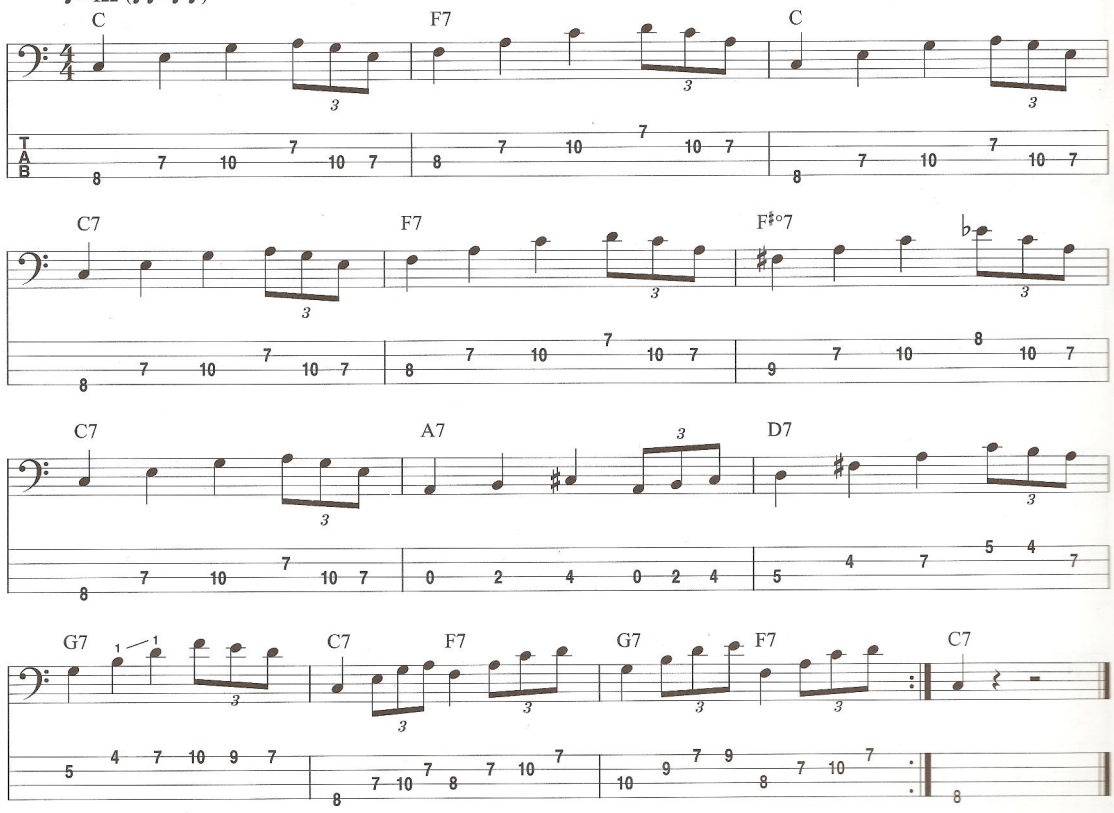
14 **Blues No. 13**

♩ = 122 (♫ = ♩³♪)



15 **Blues No. 14**

♩ = 122 (♫ = ♩³♪)

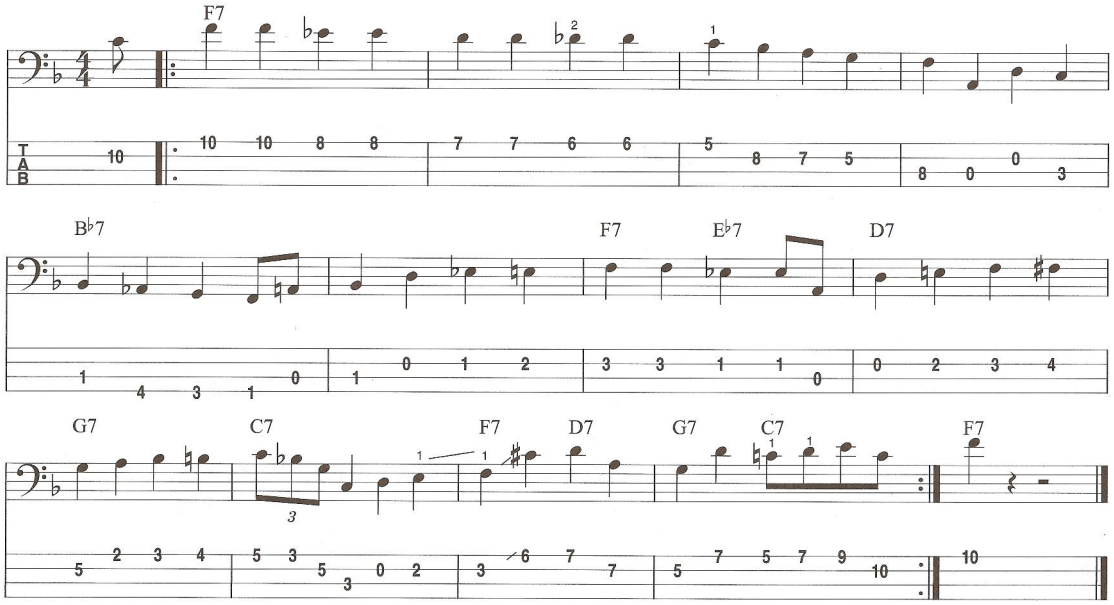


JAZZ

The next group of examples is still in the swing/shuffle style, though most of these selections have more of a bebop jazz feel. Notice how these blues are more harmonically complex as well.

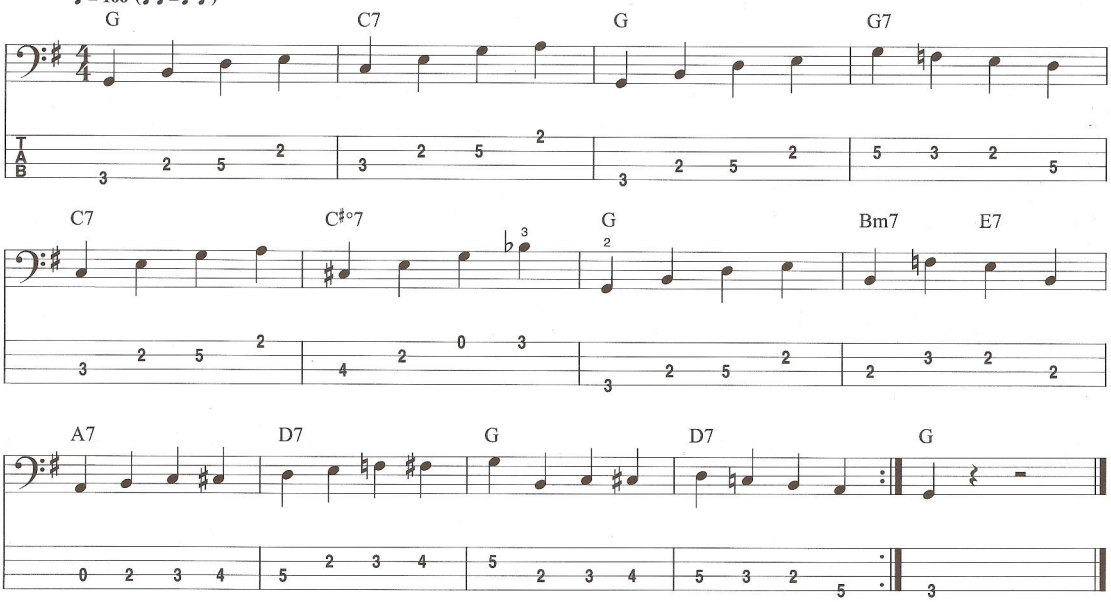
16 **Blues No. 15**

♩ = 166 (♫ = ♩ ♪)



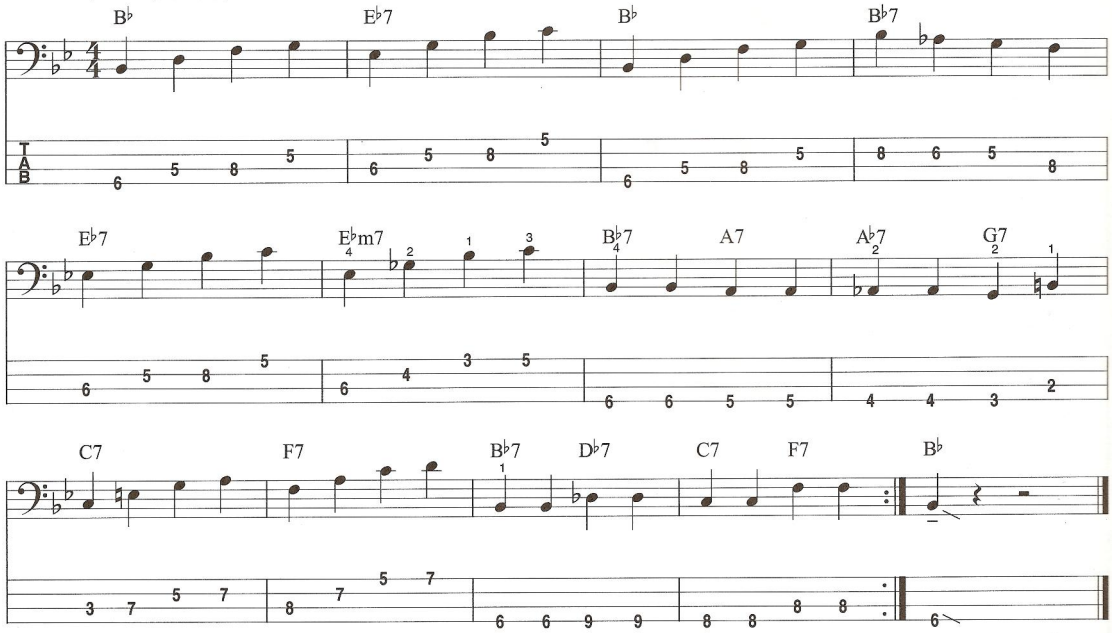
17 **Blues No. 16**

♩ = 166 (♫ = ♩ ♪)



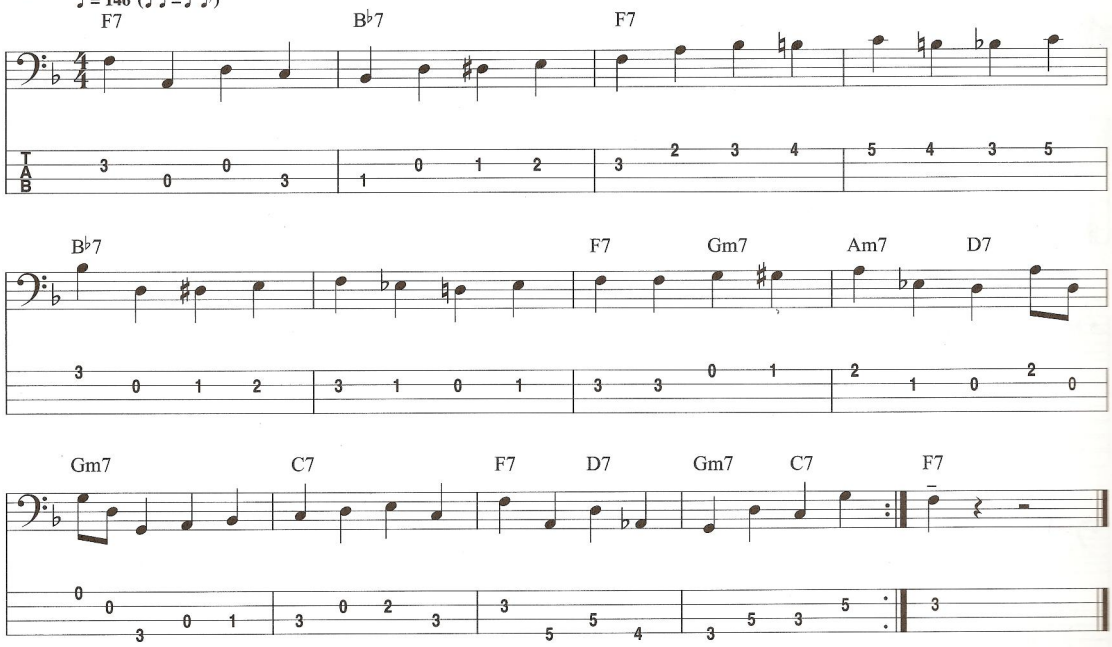
18 **Blues No. 17**

♩ = 166 (♫ = ♩³♪)



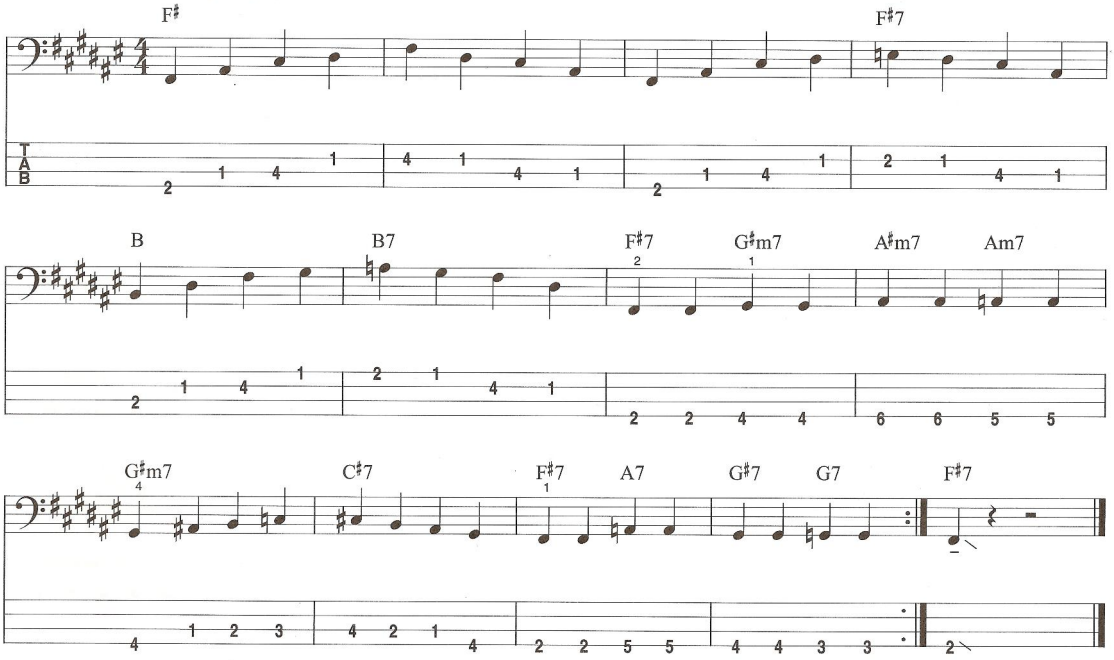
19 **Blues No. 18**

♩ = 146 (♫ = ♩³♪)



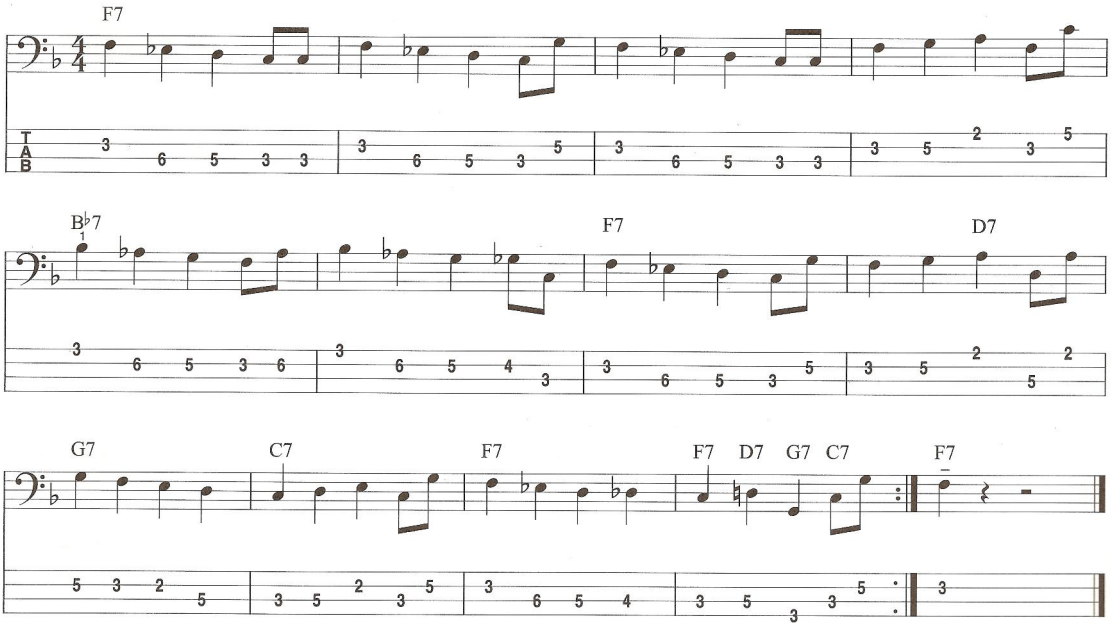
20 **Blues No. 19**

♩ = 146 (♫ = ♩³♪)



21 **Blues No. 20**

♩ = 94 (♫ = ♩³♪)

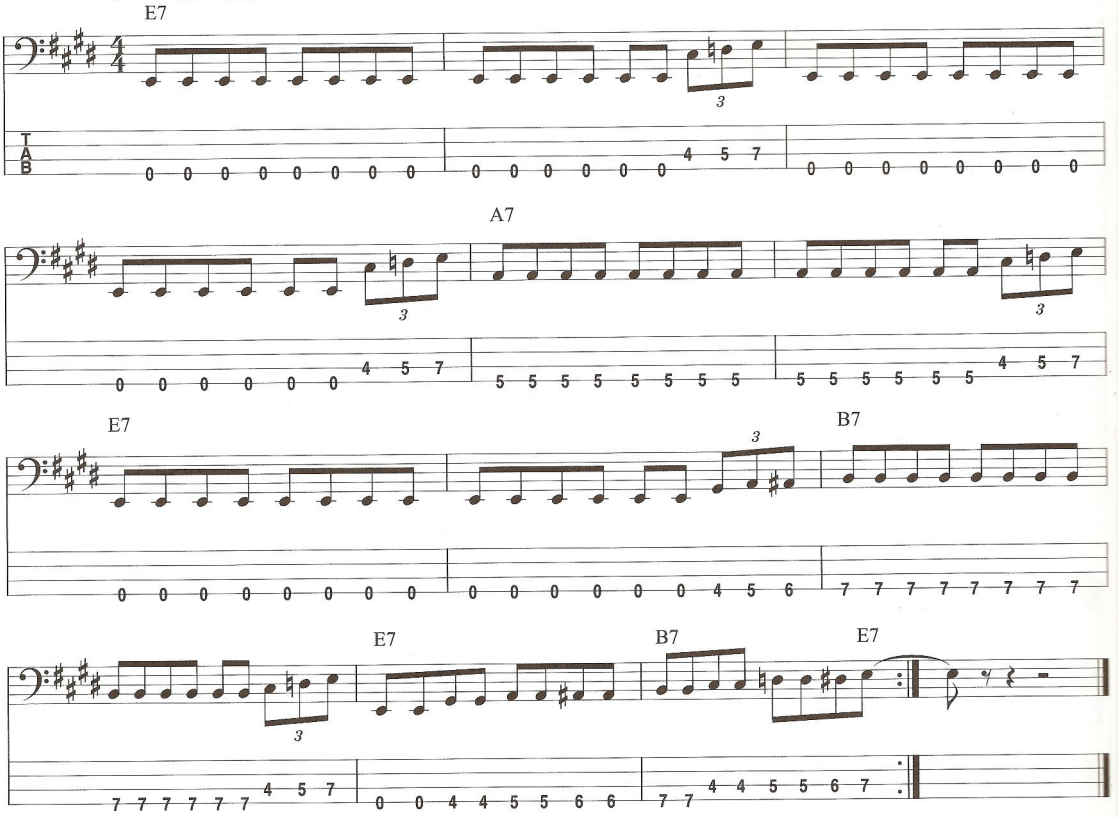


POP

These next selections, all shuffles, have more of a rock-oriented "pop" feel, though the lines make frequent use of triplets. Notice the harder edge to this music, particularly in Blues No. 21.

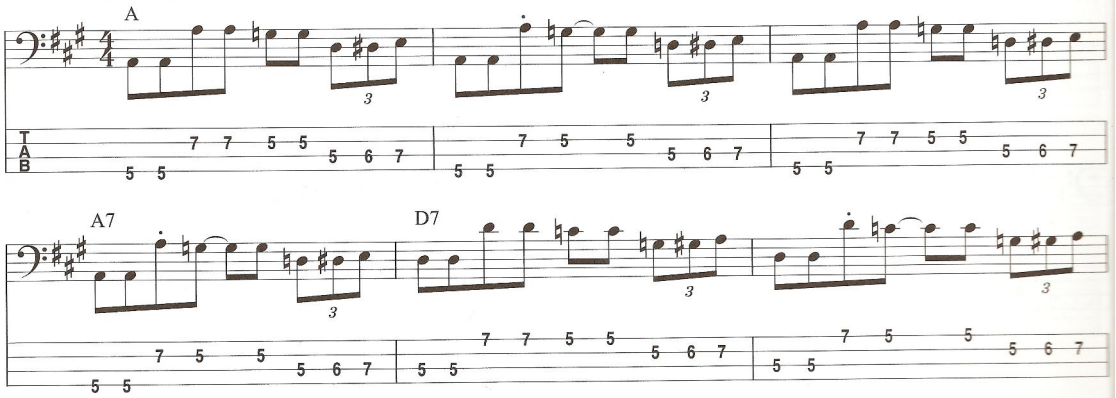
22 **Blues No. 21**

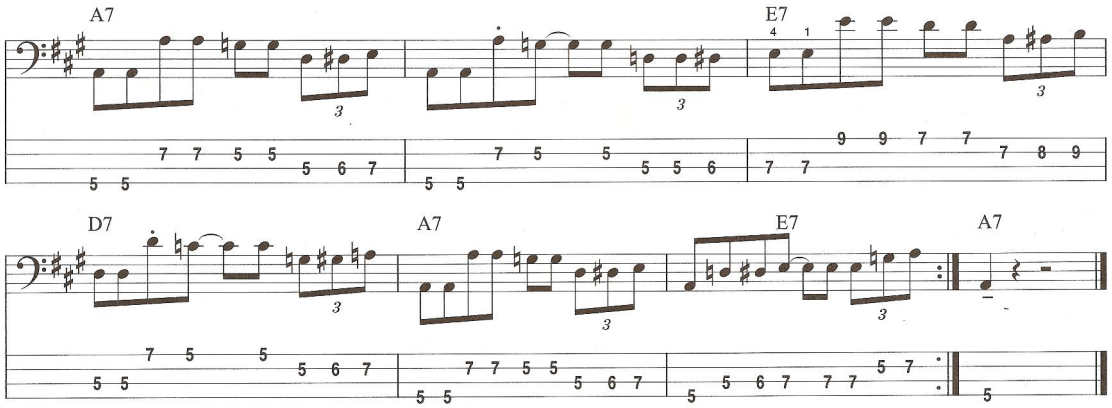
♩ = 102 (♫ = ♩³♪)



23 **Blues No. 22**

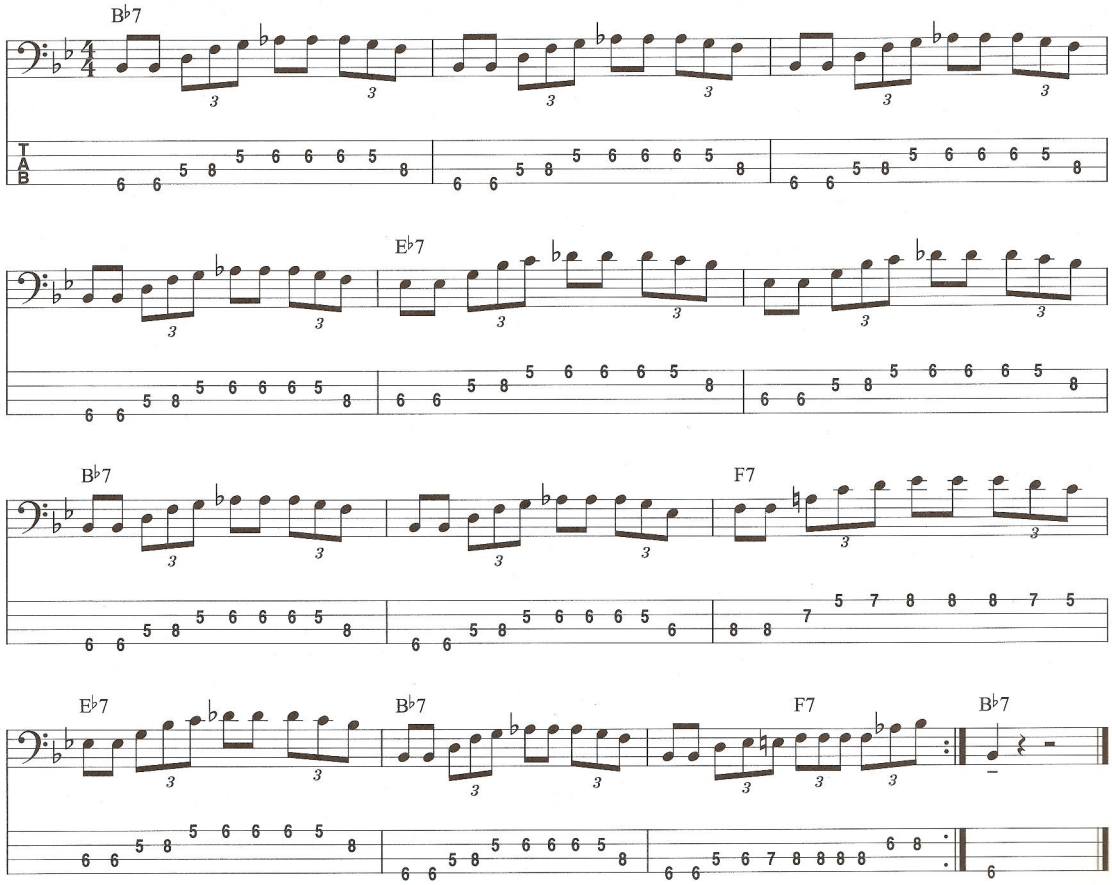
♩ = 102 (♫ = ♩³♪)





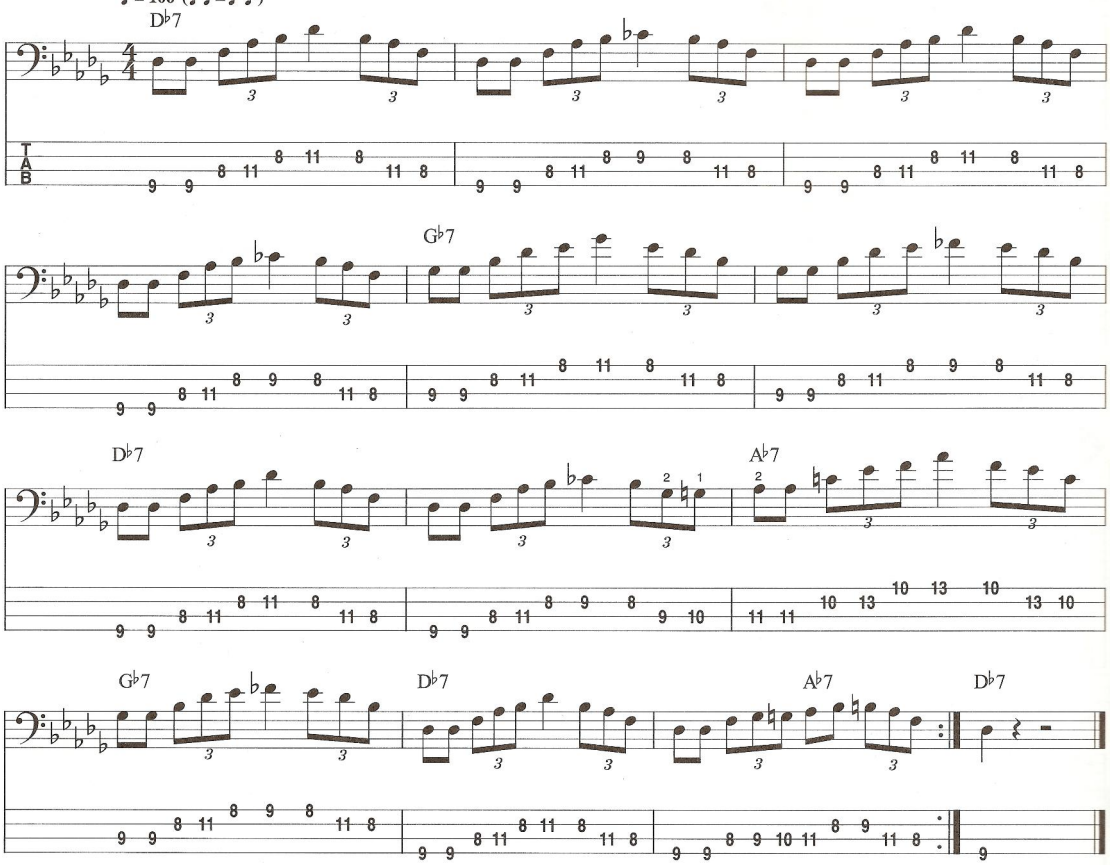
24 **Blues No. 23**

♩ = 106 (♫ = ♩³♪)



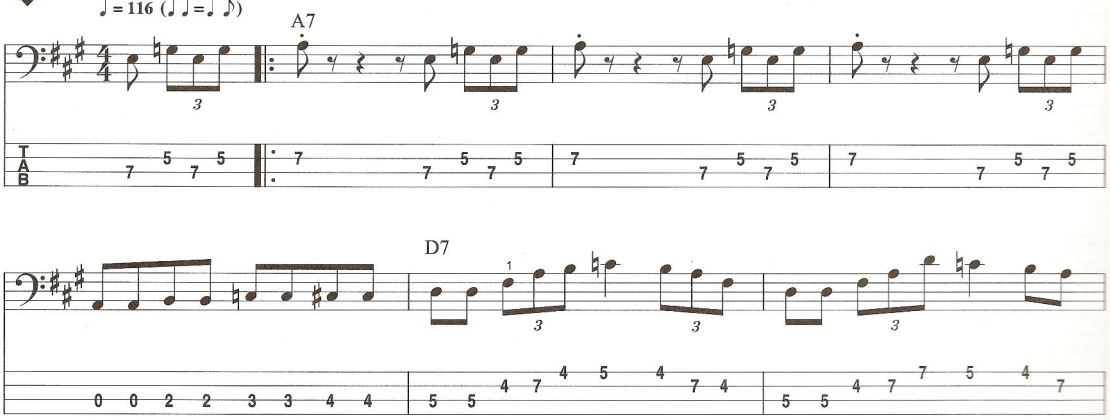
25 **Blues No. 24**

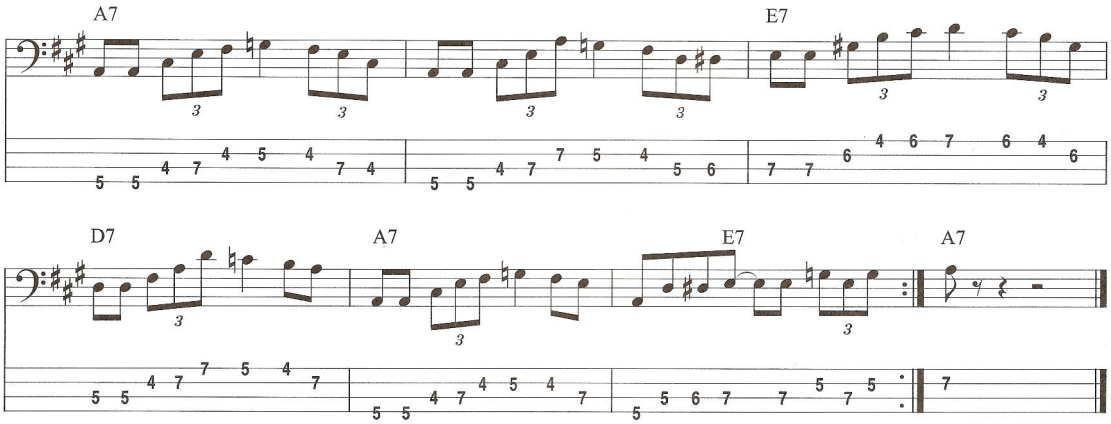
♩ = 106 (♫ = ♩³♪)



26 **Blues No. 25**

♩ = 116 (♫ = ♩³♪)



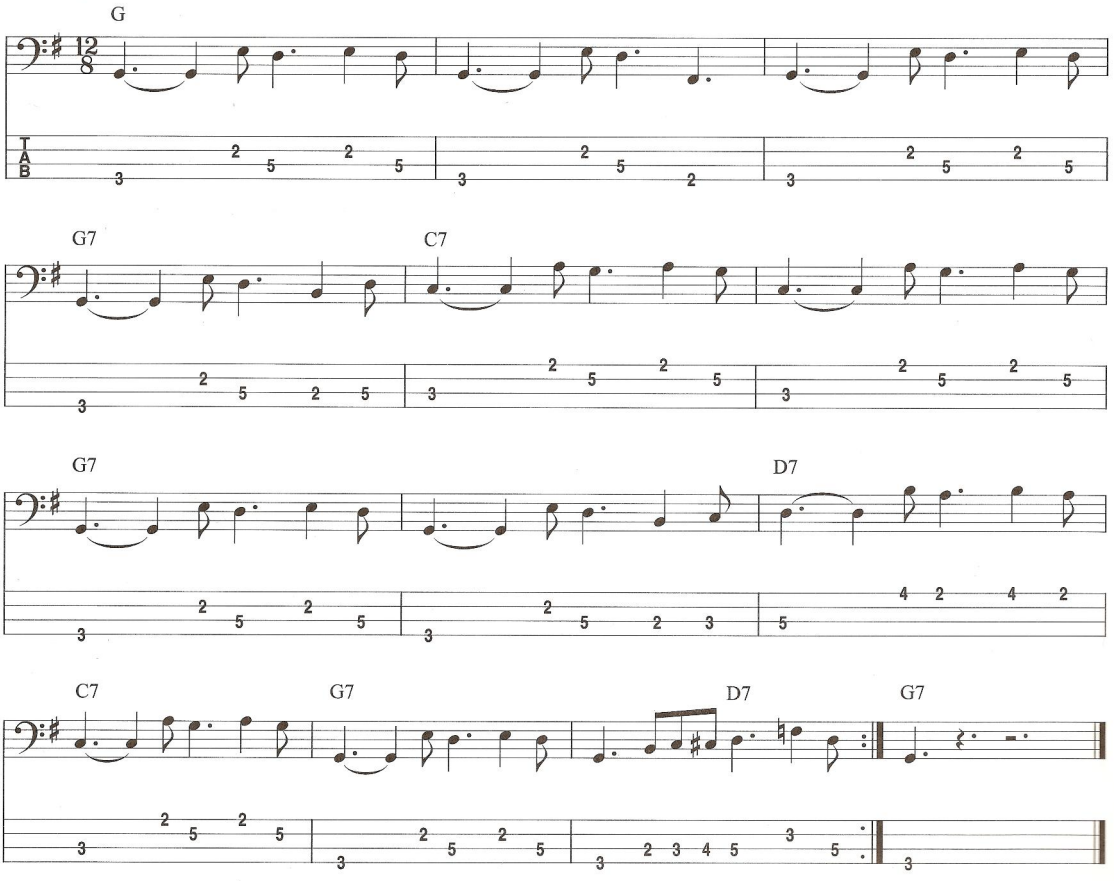


SLOW BLUES

The slow blues is another very popular style. Some of these selections have hints of gospel, too. The 12/8 feel just begs for a heavy triplet subdivision. Make sure you play these with some soul!

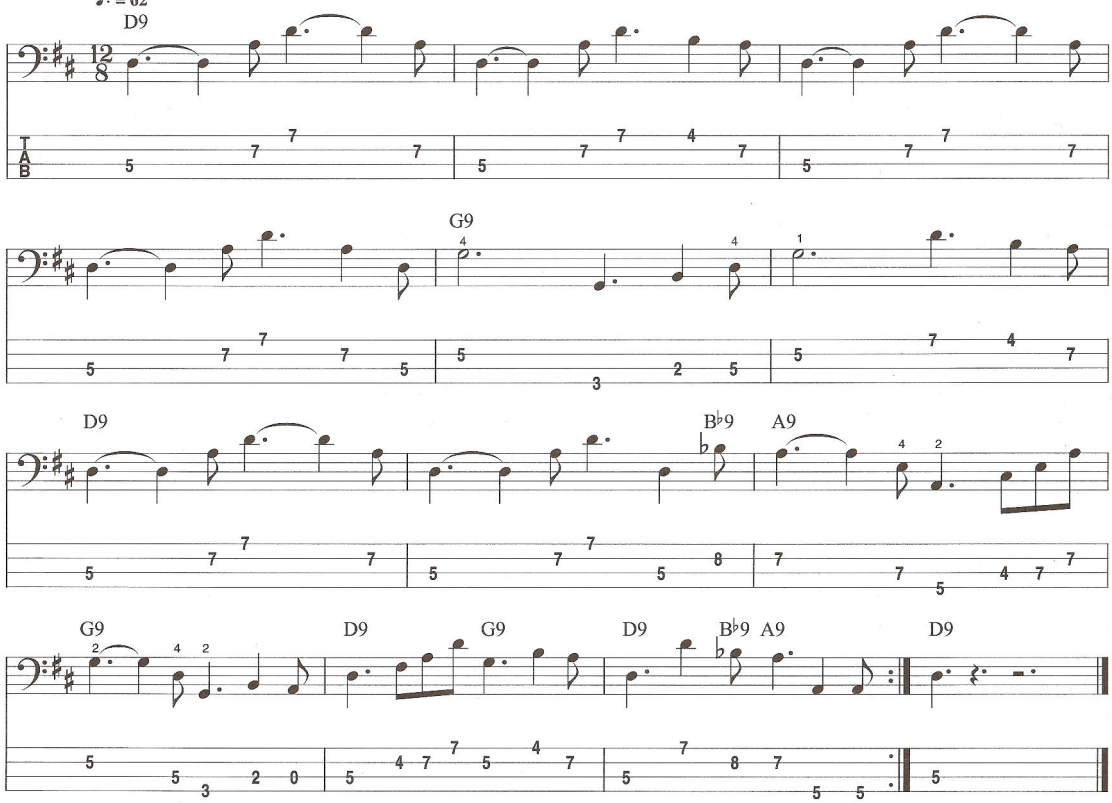
27 **Blues No. 26**

♩. = 74

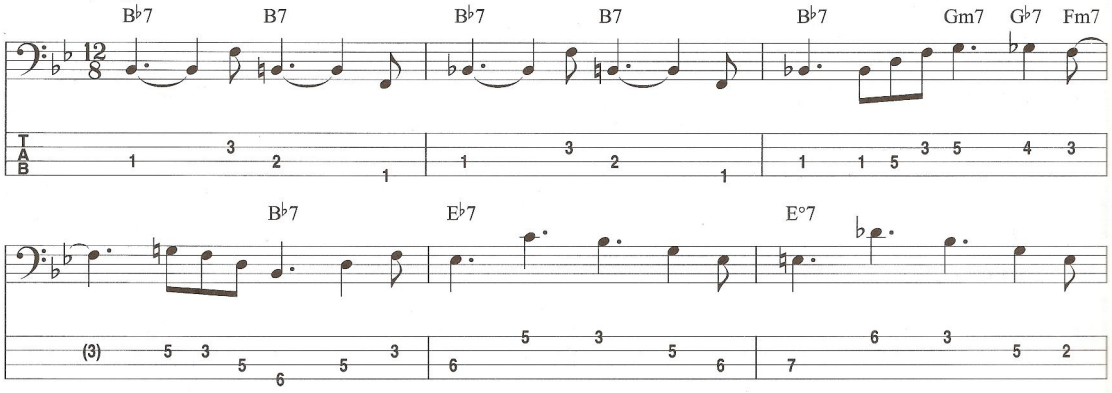


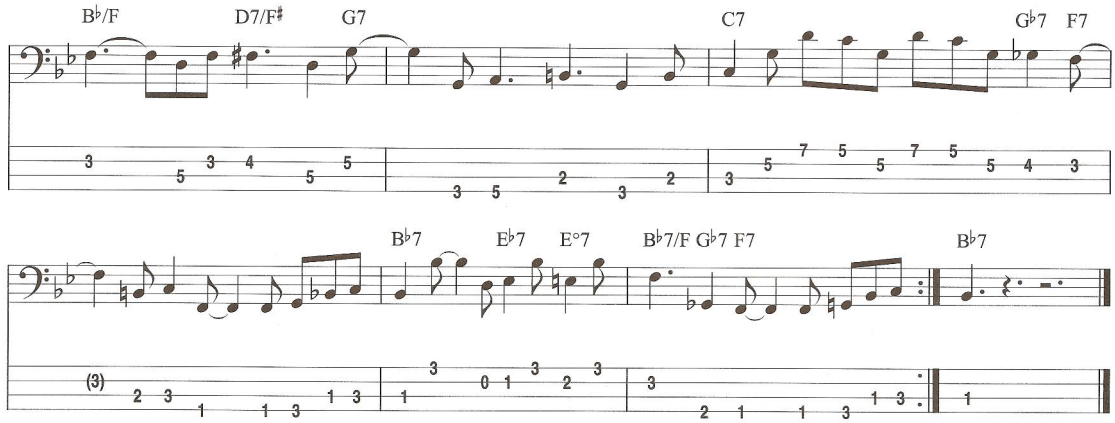
Blues No. 27 will require a little dexterity and some finger-"squishing" in order to be played smoothly. Make sure you let the notes ring out. Try the suggested fingerings. Listen to the CD to make sure you get it right.

28 **Blues No. 27**



29 **Blues No. 28**

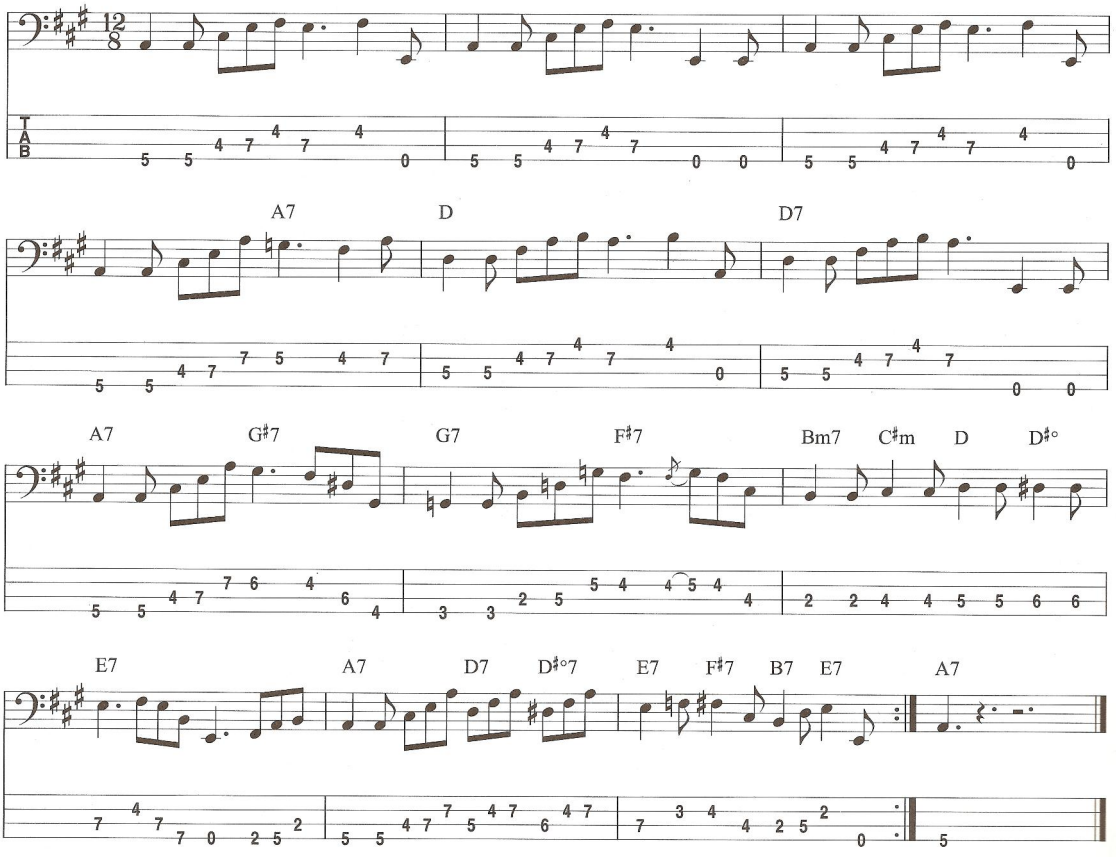




30 **Blues No. 29**

♩. = 62

A

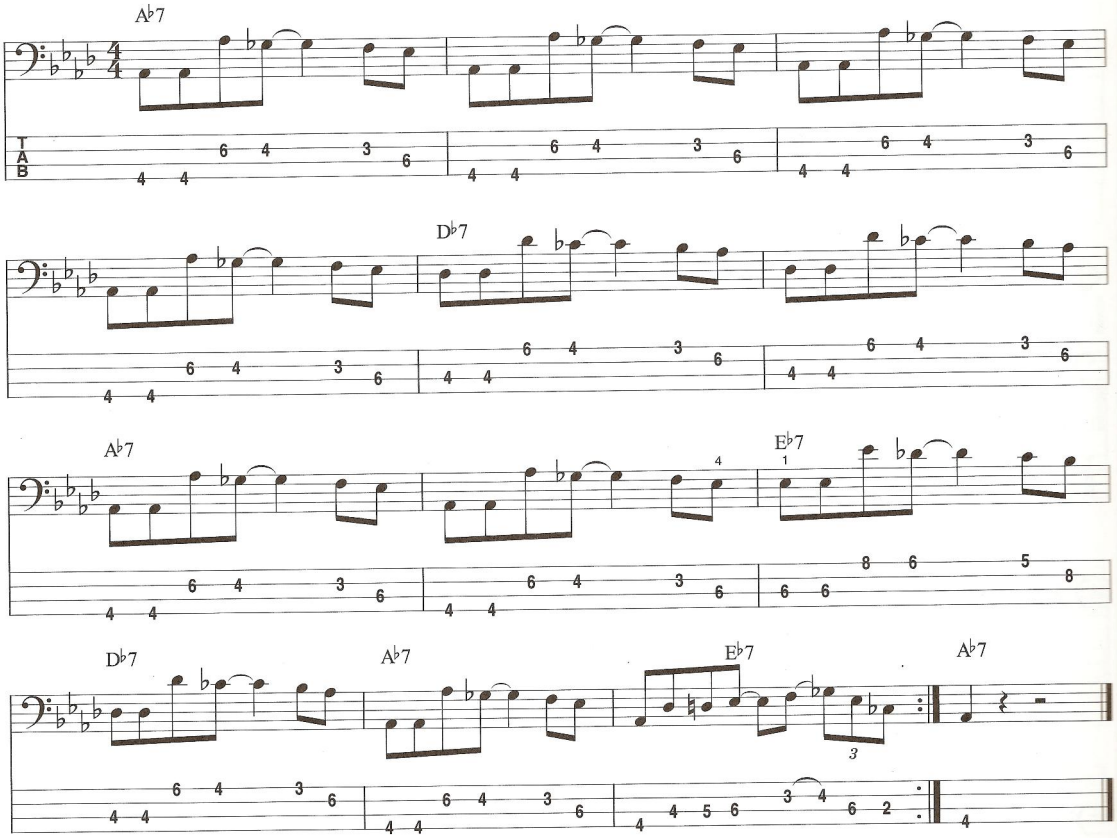


SYNCOPATION

Here are a few shuffle variations. These examples make use of syncopation and are a bit more intricate than the previous selections. Practice these grooves carefully to make sure you play them properly and cleanly.

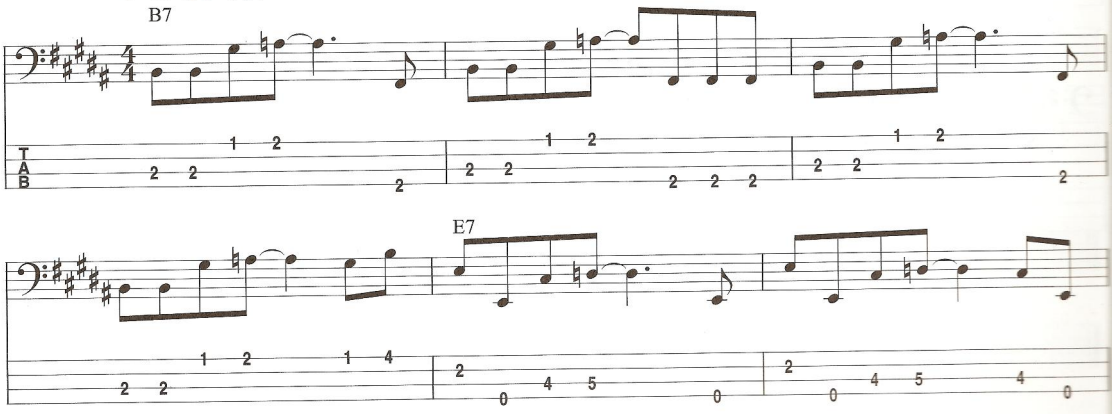
31 **Blues No. 30**

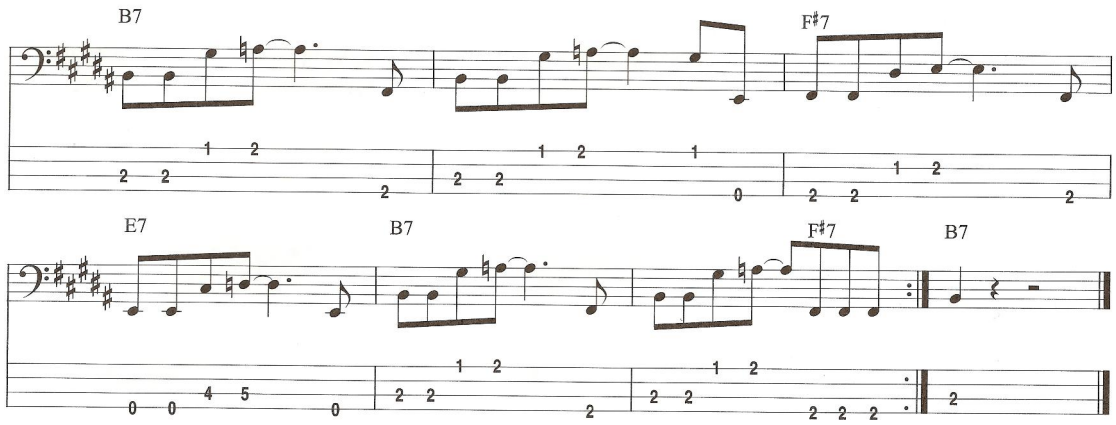
♩ = 85 (♫ = ♩³♪)



32 **Blues No. 31**

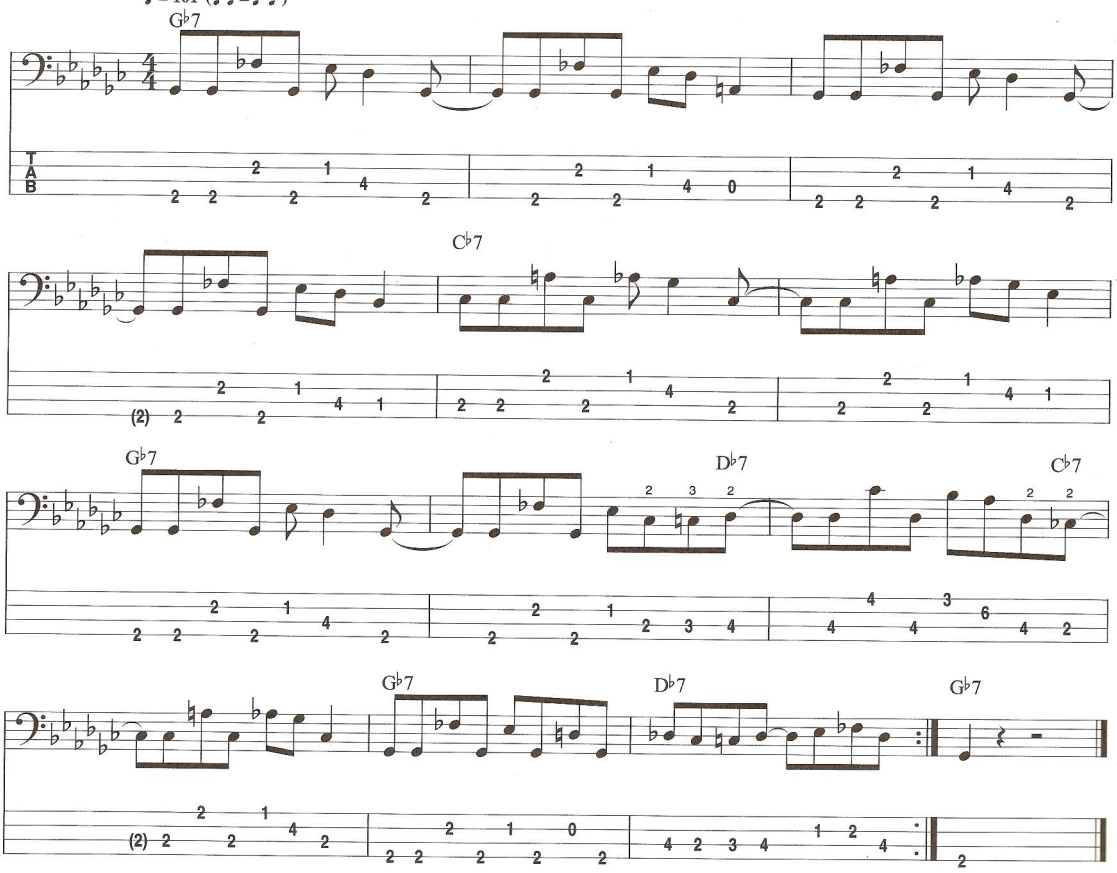
♩ = 89 (♫ = ♩³♪)





33 **Blues No. 32**

♩ = 101 (♫ = ♩³♪)



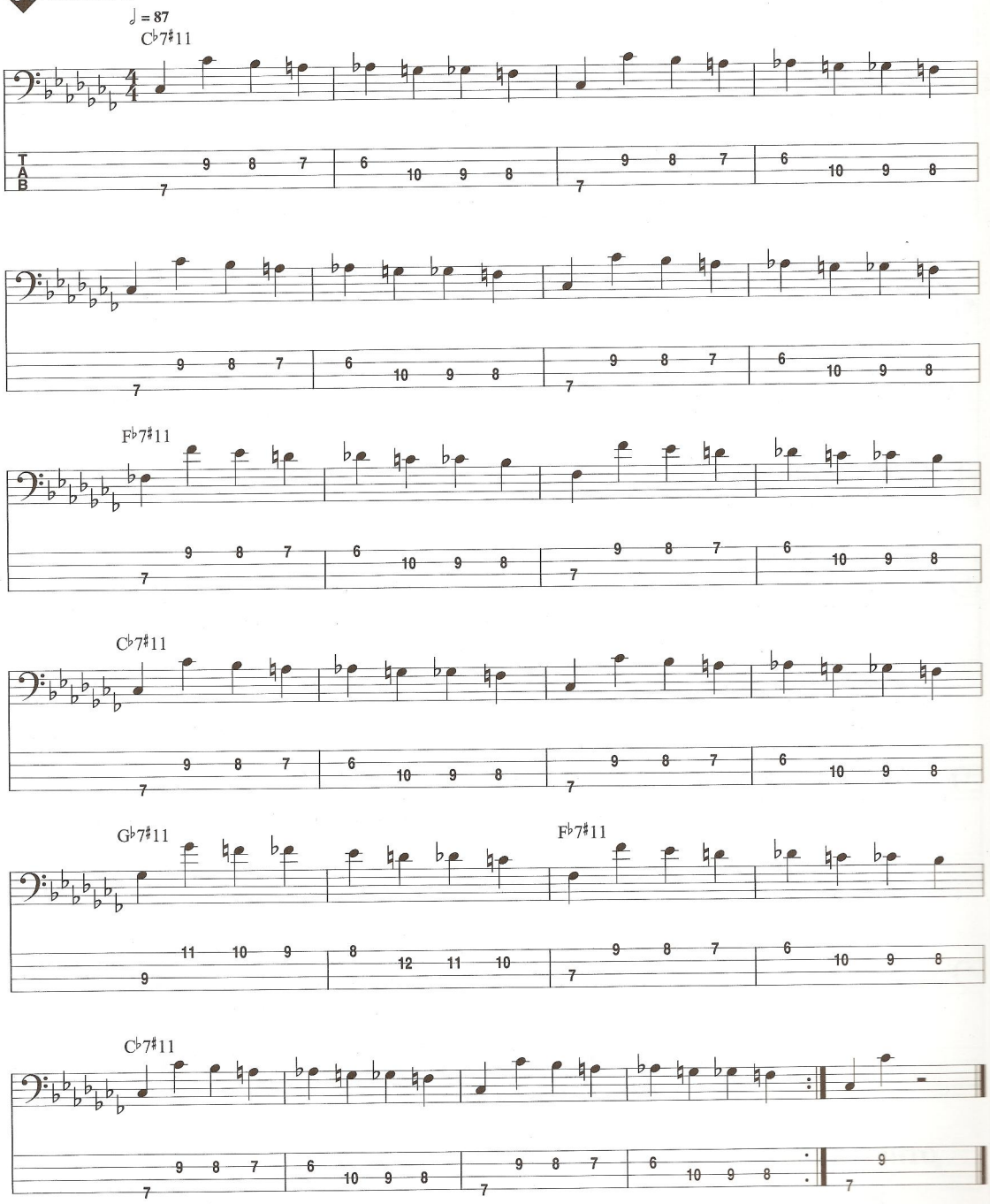
OTHER BLUES FORMS

Blues 33-40 illustrate some other varieties of blues forms.

24-Bar Blues

Blues No. 33 is an elongated form containing twenty-four bars, as opposed to the traditional twelve. It's played in a bright jazz-style tempo with a half-time feel. Take a good look at the key signature before you begin!

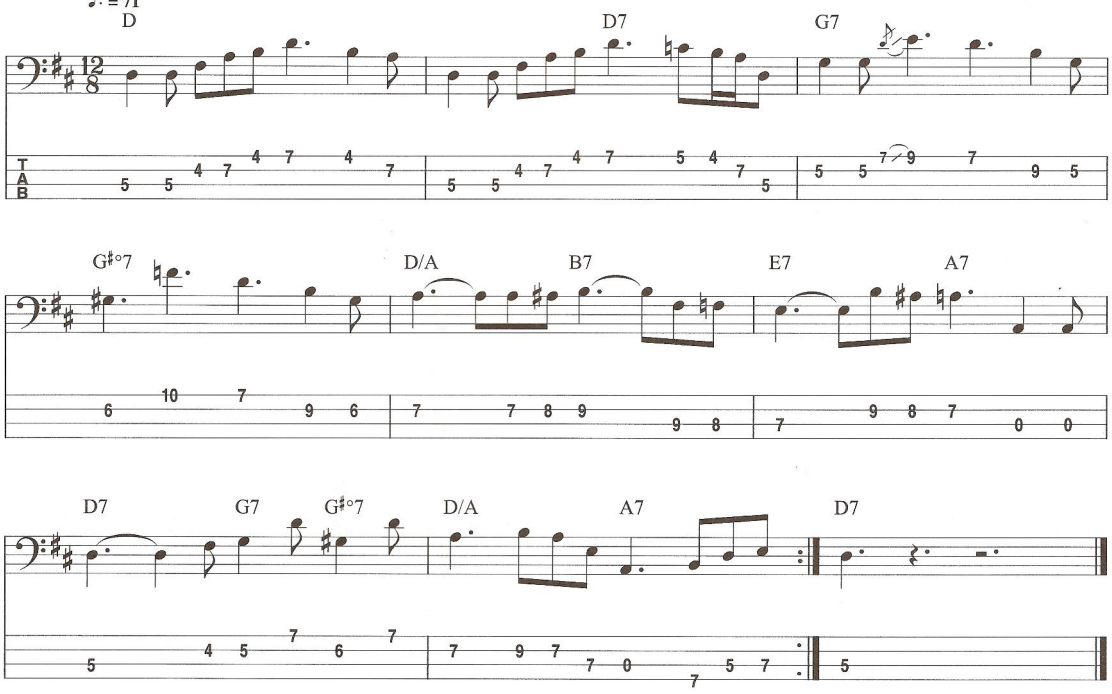
34 Blues No. 33



8-Bar Blues

Blues No. 34 is an example of an eight-bar blues. It contains elements of gospel and soul, as well.

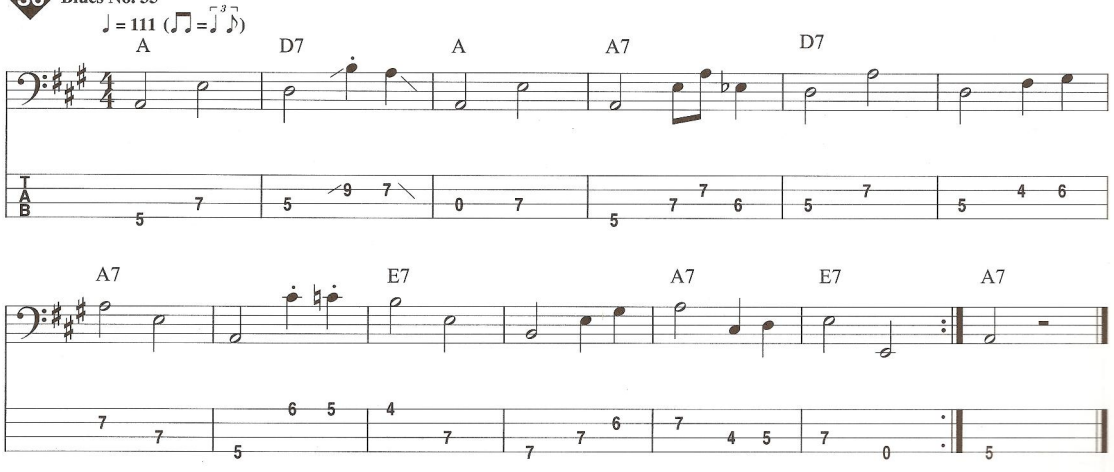
35 **Blues No. 34**



Country Blues

This next blues has a two-beat "country" type of feel.

36 **Blues No. 35**

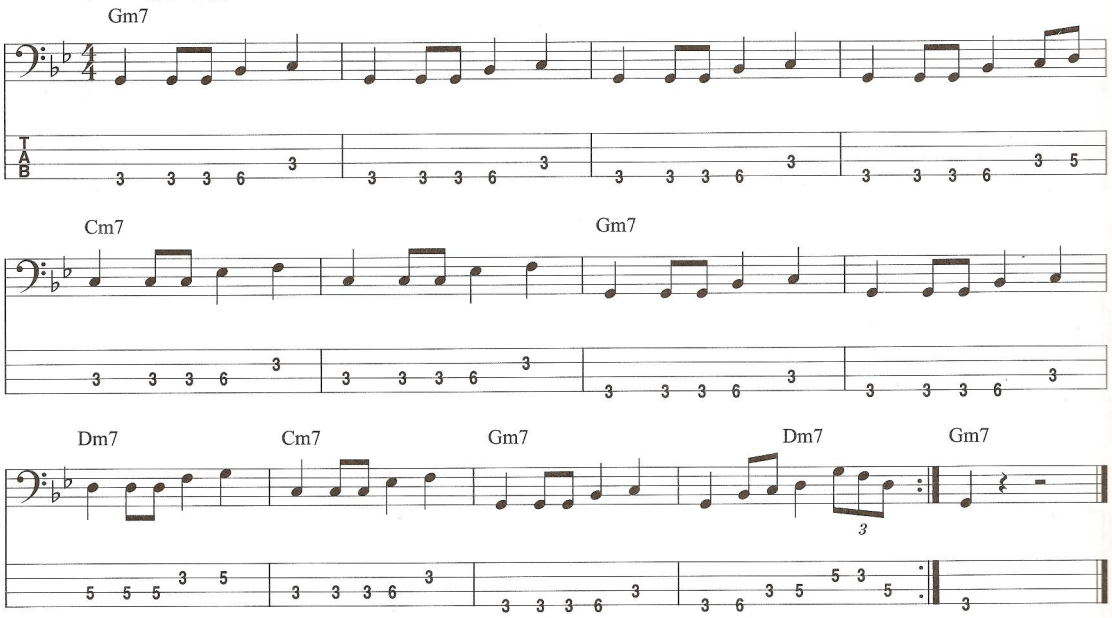


Minor Blues

Blues No. 36 and No. 37 are examples of minor blues. Notice the flavor of using minor chords throughout. Also, in measure 5 of Blues No. 37, as your ear is expecting to hear an A♭m7 chord (the iv chord), the C♭7 chord makes for an interesting surprise.

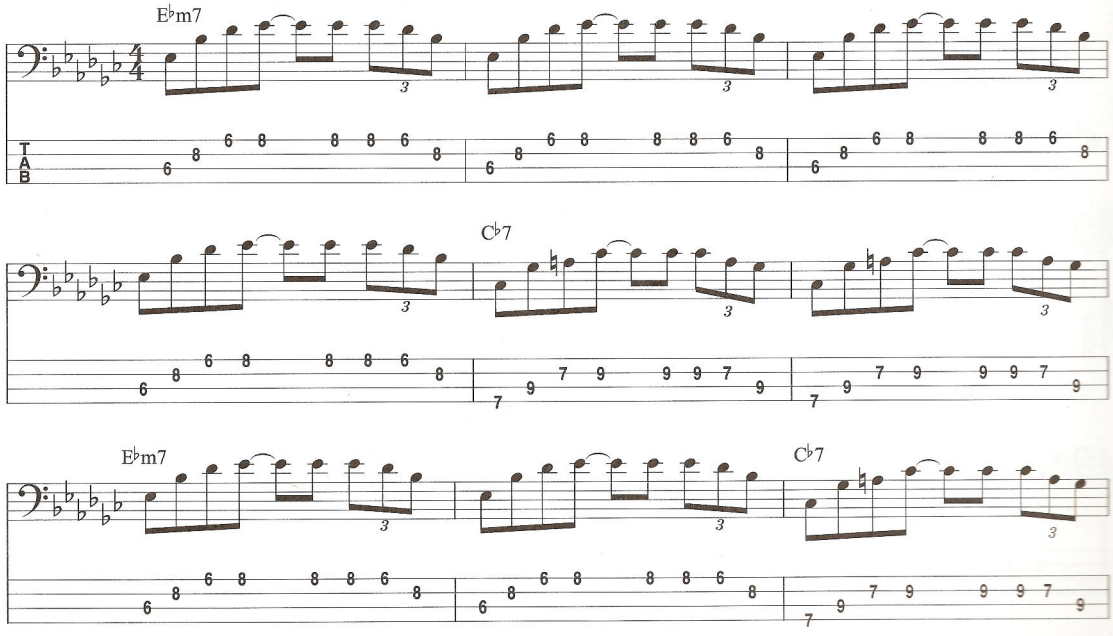
37 **Blues No. 36**

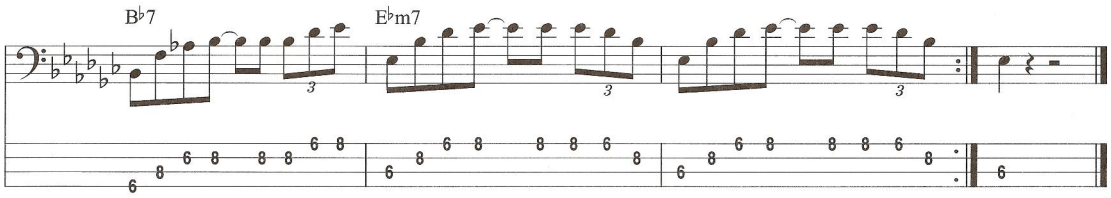
♩ = 113 (♫ = ♩³♪)



38 **Blues No. 37**

♩ = 121 (♫ = ♩³♪)



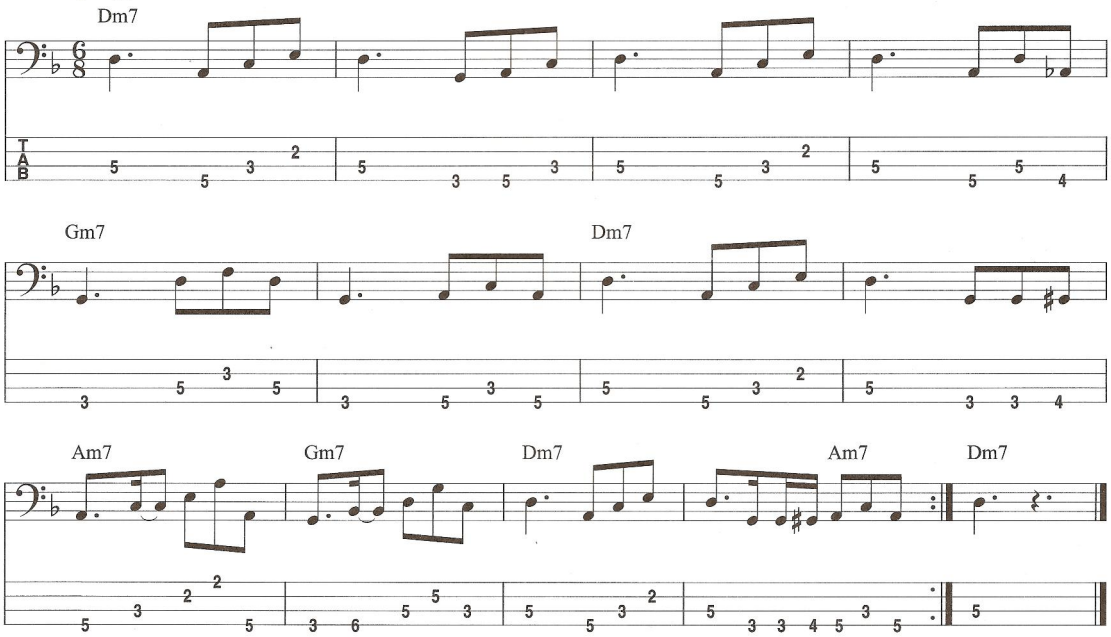


Blues in Other Meters

Not every blues you hear and play is in 4/4 time, or even 12/8. Blues 38-40 are in different time signatures. Notice that they are all in minor keys, as well. Count carefully!

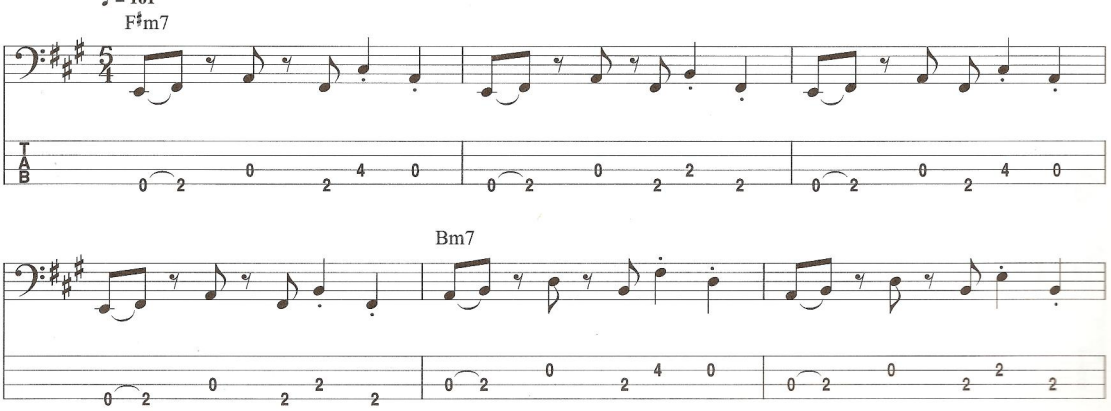
39 **Blues No. 38**

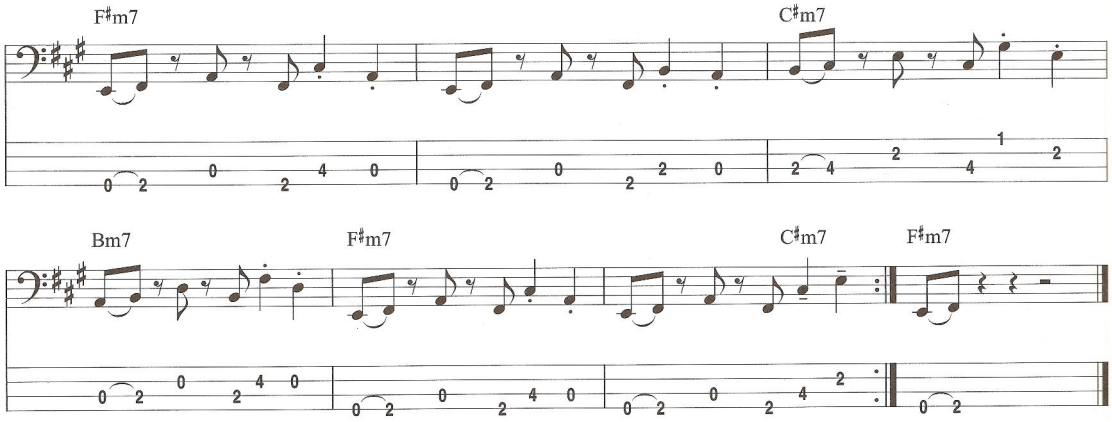
♩. = 62



40 **Blues No. 39**

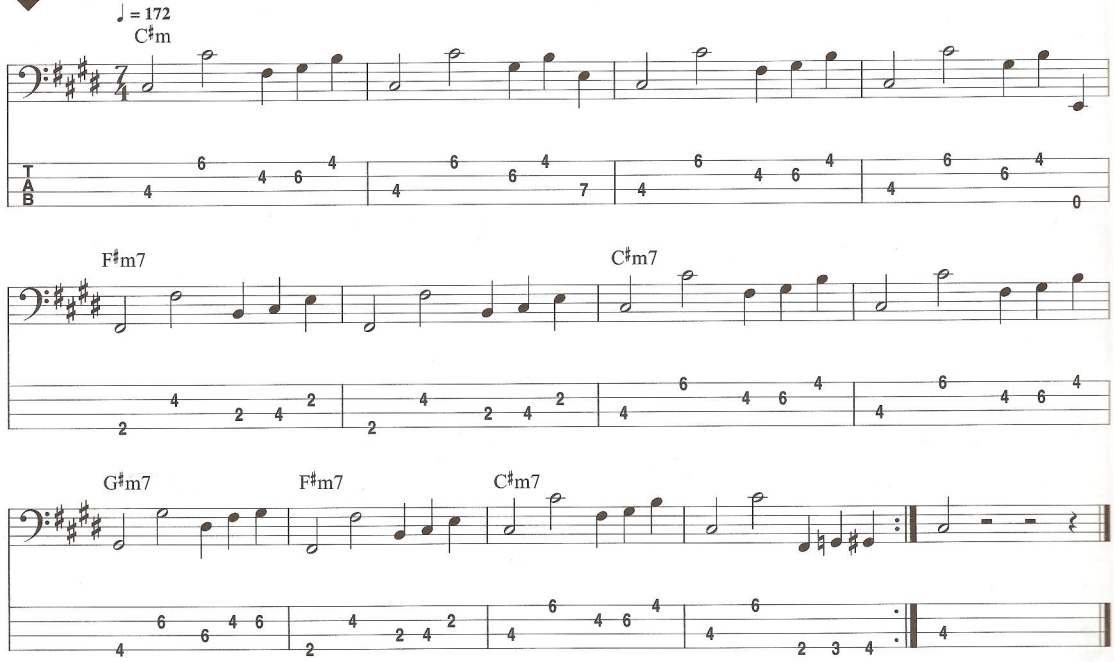
♩ = 161





41 **Blues No. 40**

♩ = 172

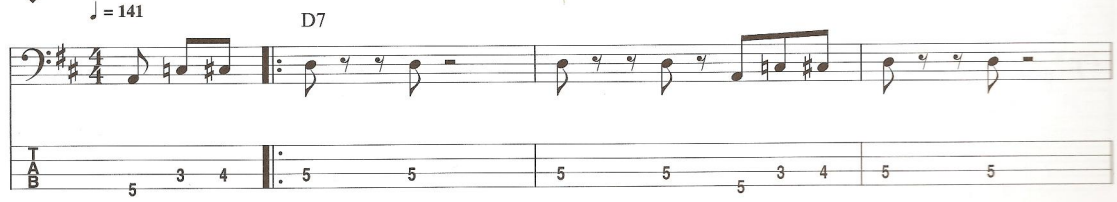


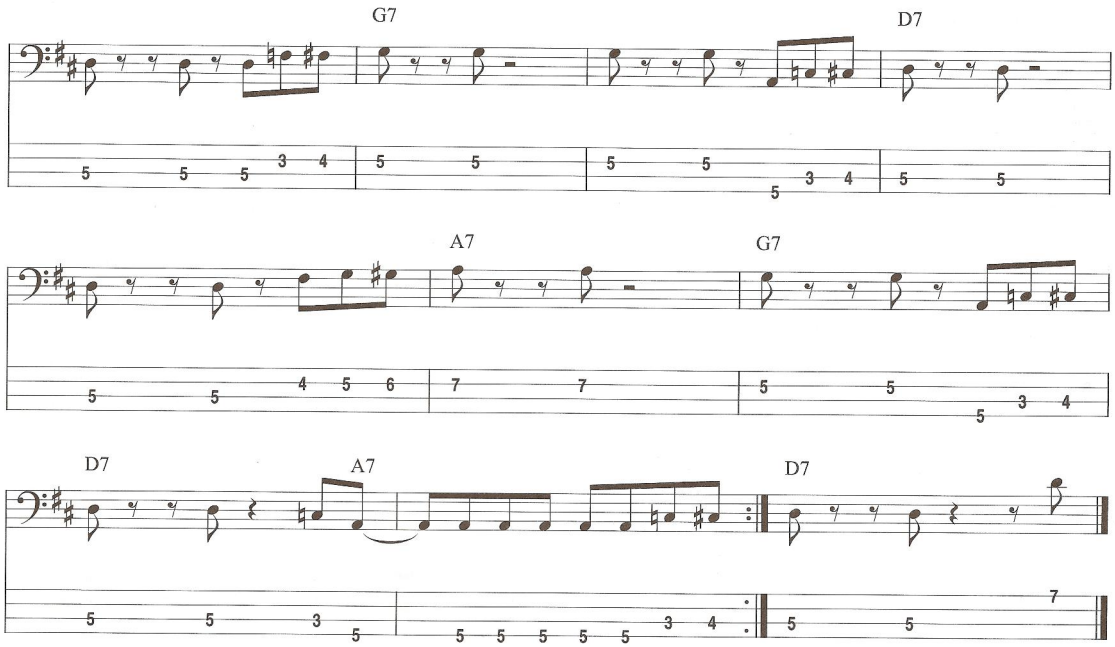
FUNK ROCK

Examples 41-42 are in a funk-oriented style. Make sure you listen to the CD to get the right feel on these.

42 **Blues No. 41**

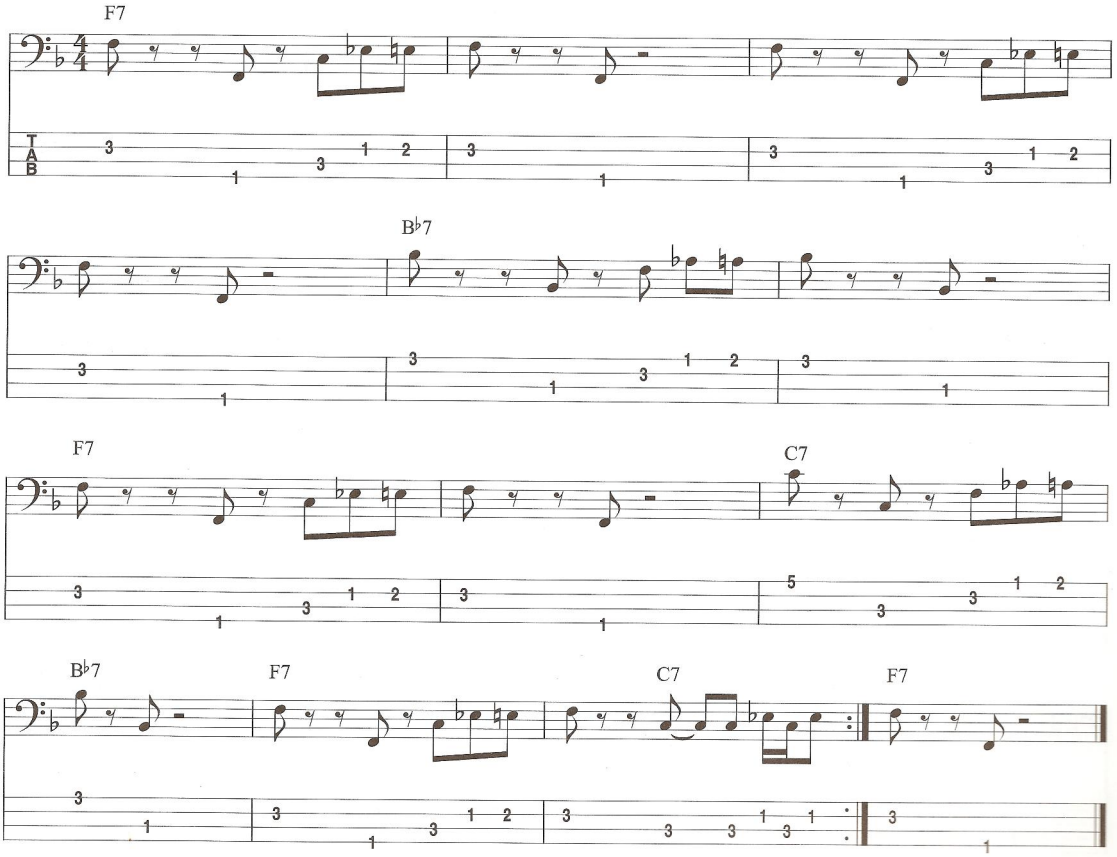
♩ = 141





43 **Blues No. 42**

♩ = 141

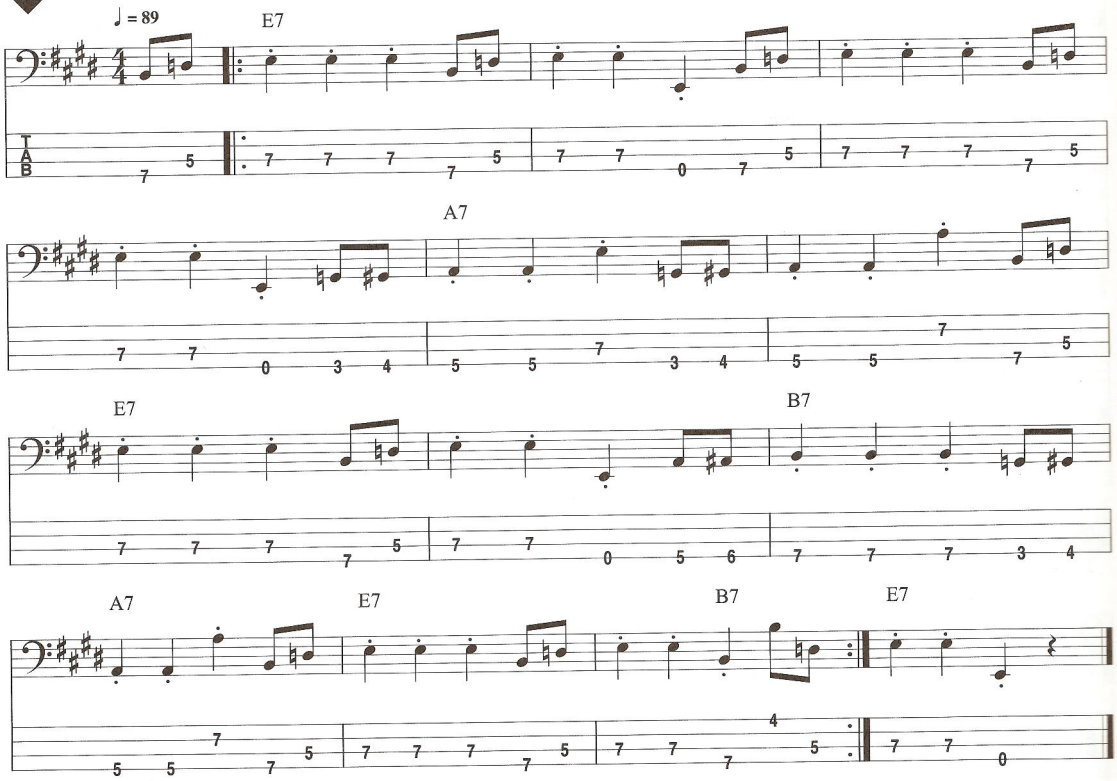


ROCK 'N' ROLL

Here are a few varieties of rock 'n' roll, as influenced by the blues. I think you'll have fun with these.

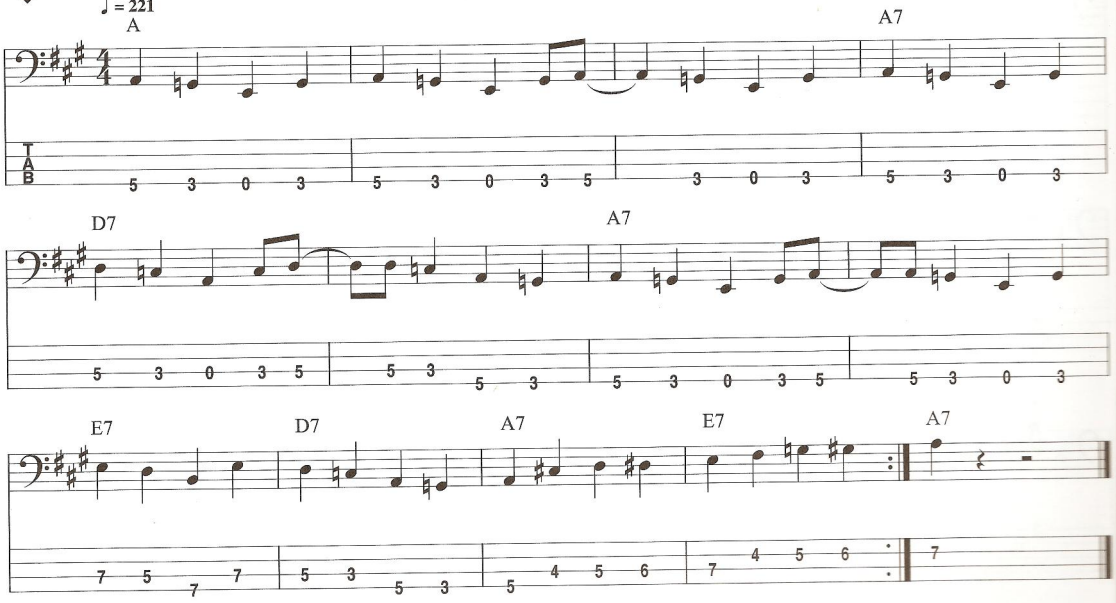
44 **Blues No. 43**

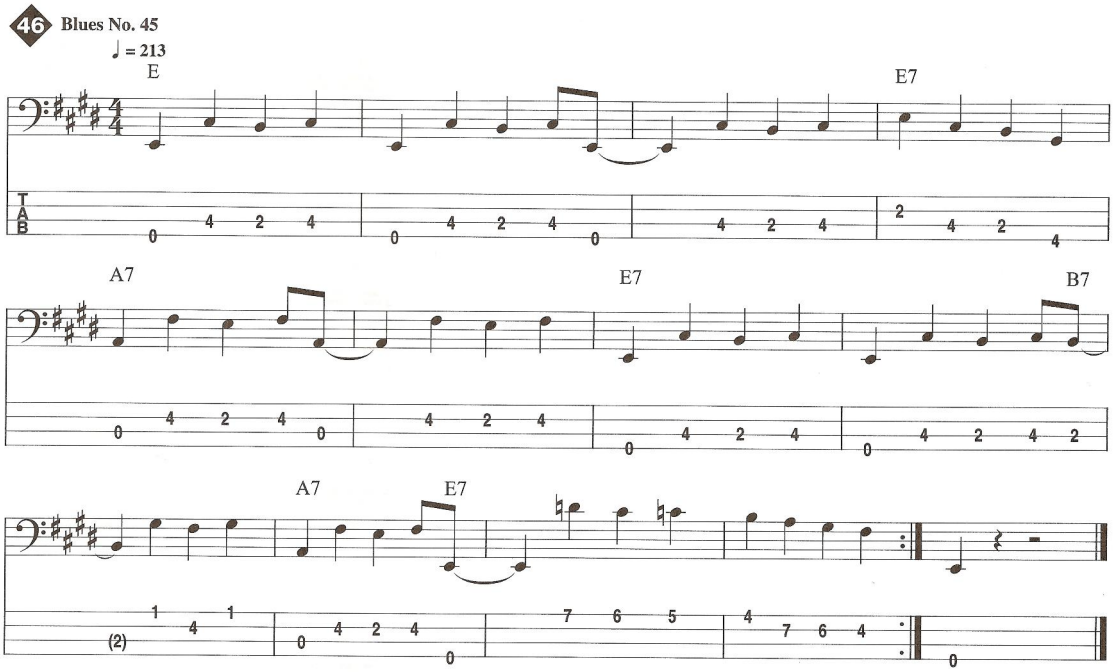
♩ = 89



45 **Blues No. 44**

♩ = 221

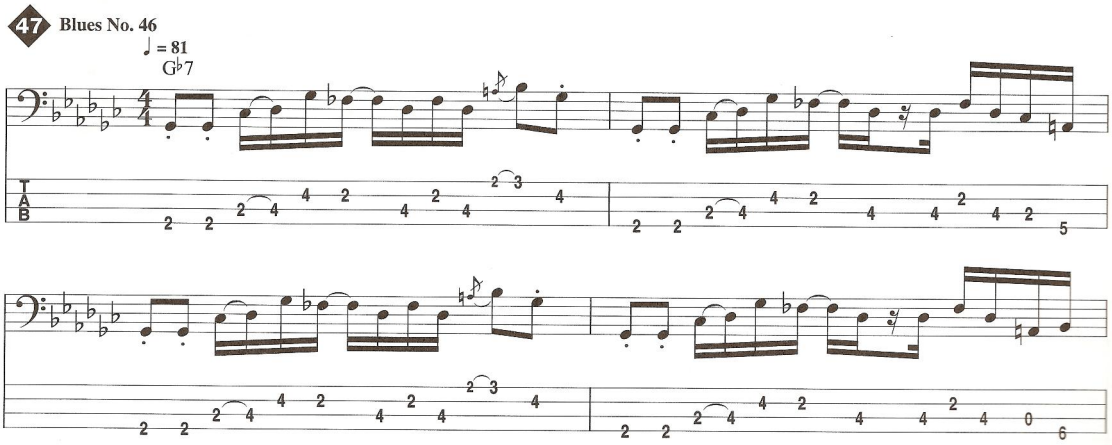


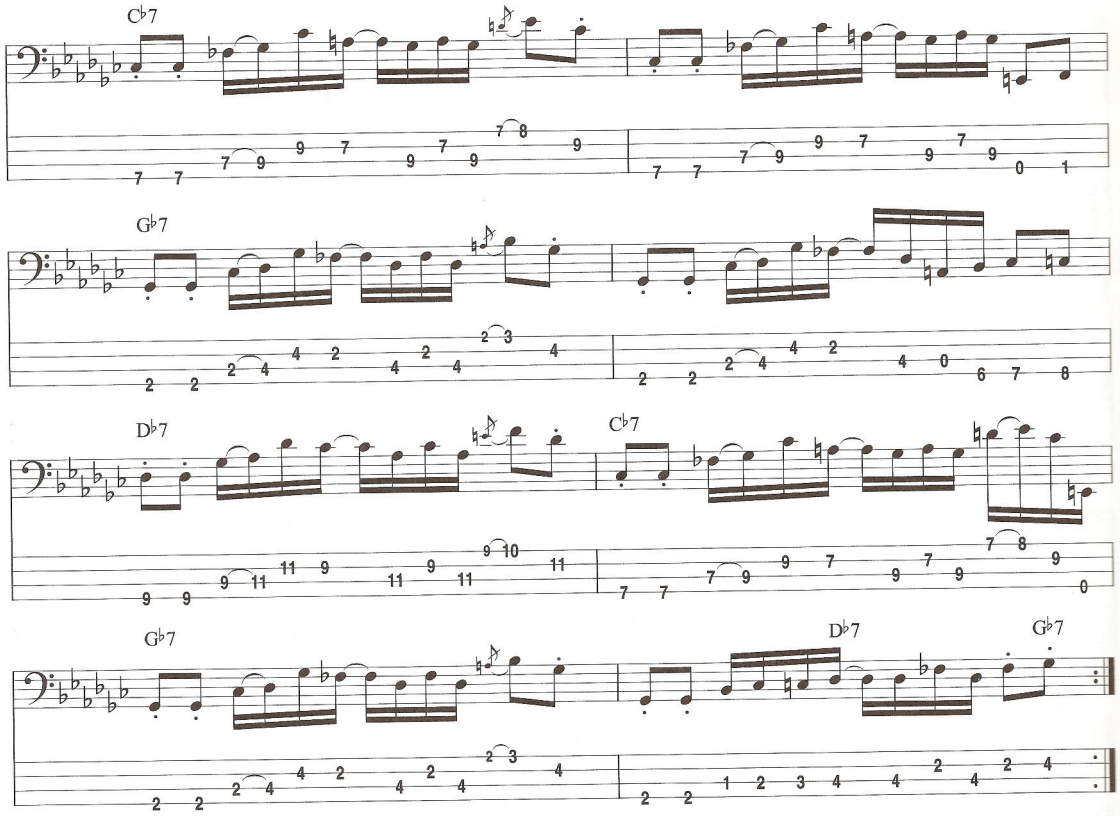


R&B

Selections 46-48 are written with a rhythm 'n' blues feel. These blues are somewhat advanced and quite a bit busier and more intricate than the previous examples. The CD will help you a lot here.

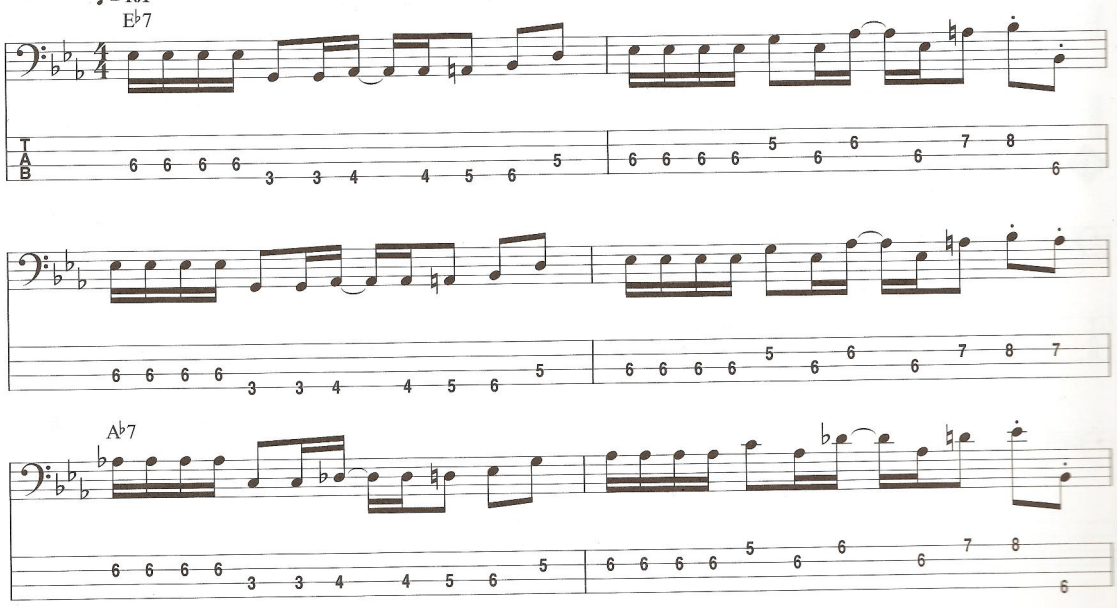
Pay close attention to the tablature in Blues 46. This blues contains some "tricks" for getting around on the bass that might come in handy if you're ever playing a show or a studio session where you encounter a line in a "non-bass-friendly" key. Notice how I use the open strings to jump smoothly from one register to another, particularly in bars 4 and 8. You never know what they might throw at you in any musical situation. I've devised tricks like this many times, without anybody ever knowing they had thrown me a non-bass-friendly line. The best part about it is keeping it a secret!

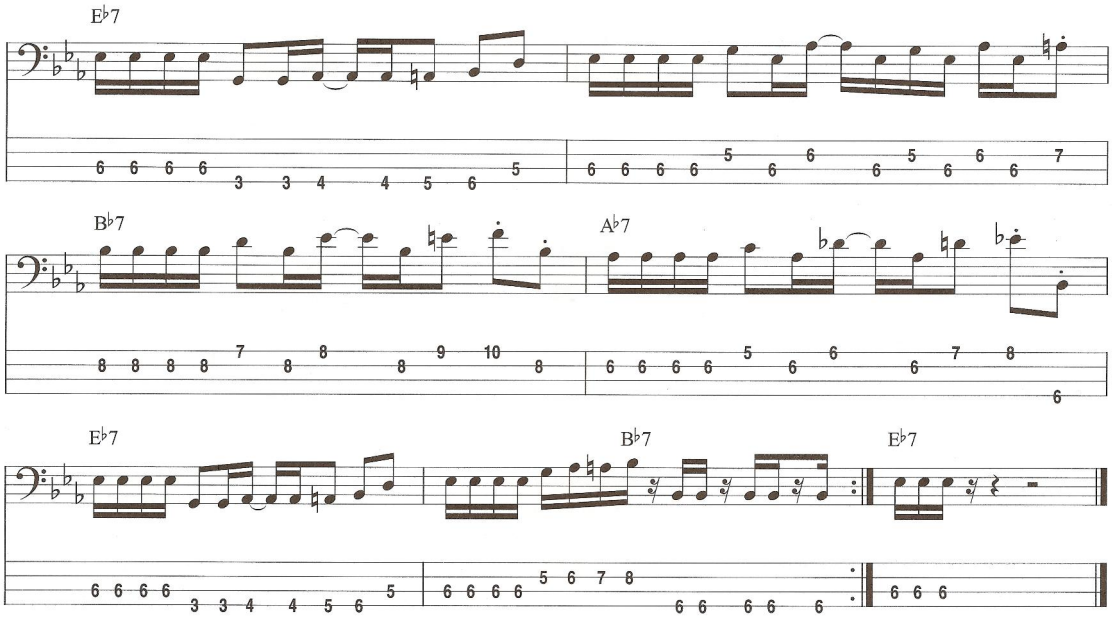




48 **Blues No. 47**

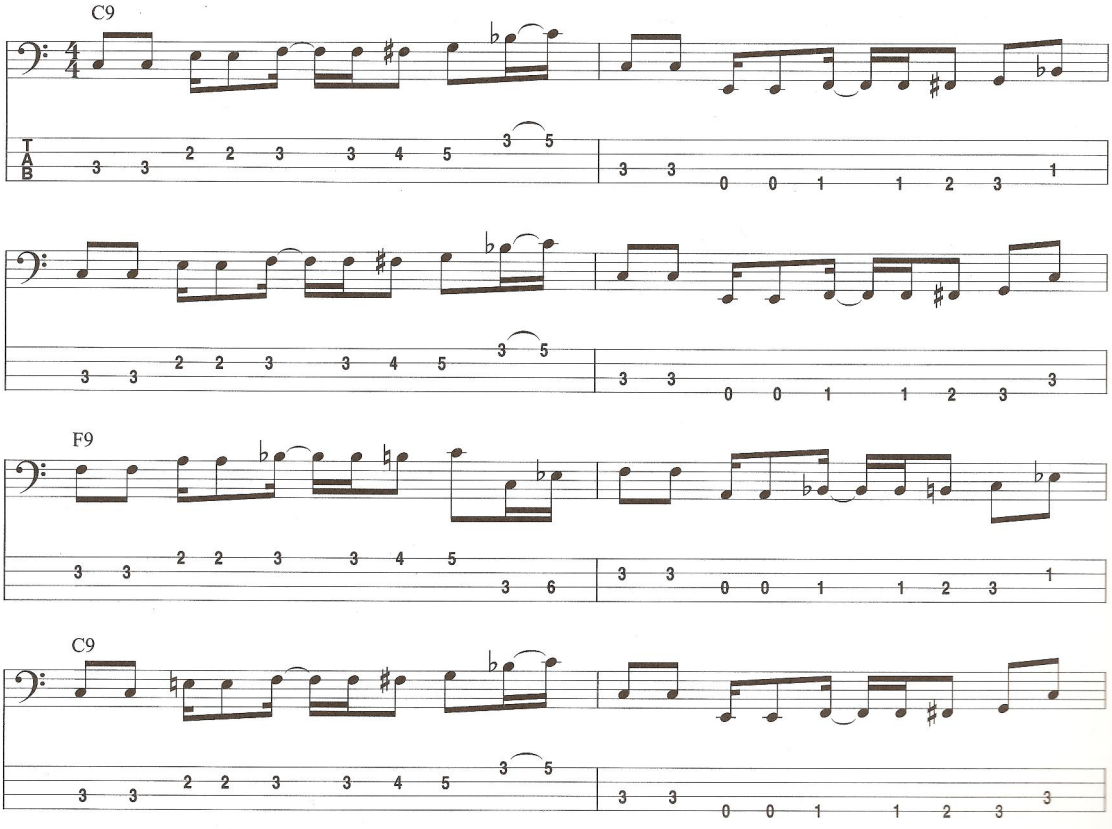
♩ = 101

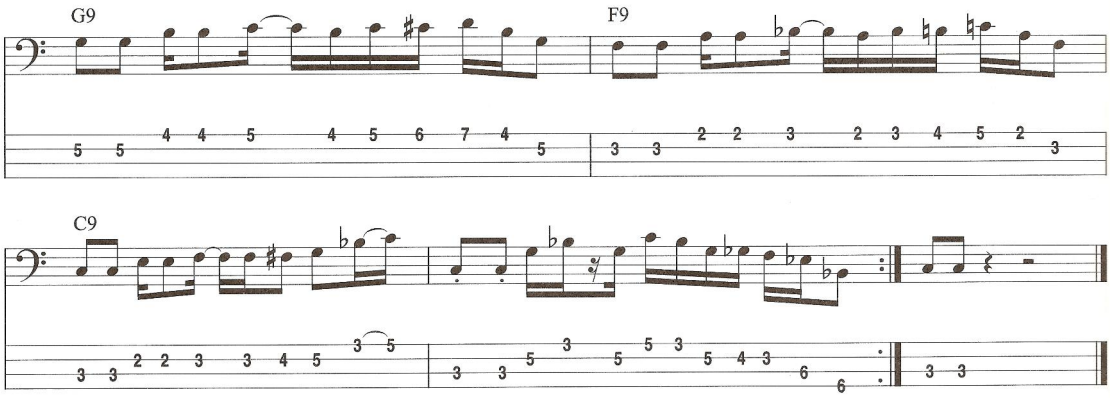




49 **Blues No. 48**

♩ = 105





Practicing these grooves will help you a great deal. Don't ever forget that playing the bass is not about learning a bunch of exercises, but about making music. See how long you can sustain a particular groove. You can alter them once in a while, but, on the whole, make sure you stick to the basics, and groove. Trying to steal the show will only cause you to lose gigs. Concentrate on grooving and locking in with the drummer, setting up that all-important musical foundation that will make everybody feel good.

You can also adapt many of the grooves from *Funk/Fusion Bass* and *Rock Bass* to the blues, as many grooves from those books are blues-oriented. If you're interested in playing the blues in slap-bass style, then *Funk Bass* would be an excellent resource for you. As you can see, there is really no limit to how many ways you can play the blues. Do it any way you want as long as you take care of business, play with a great time feel, and groove, groove, groove!

CHAPTER 4
Blues Soloing

In any style of bass playing, the job of the bassist is to groove with a great time feel. The importance of understanding this concept cannot be overemphasized. Remember to lay it down, and, in most cases, keep it simple. Occasionally, though, you will get a chance to take a solo and express yourself musically. This is the one instance where you are not concerned with laying down the time as a foundation for the rest of the band (but you still have to play your solo with a great time feel!).

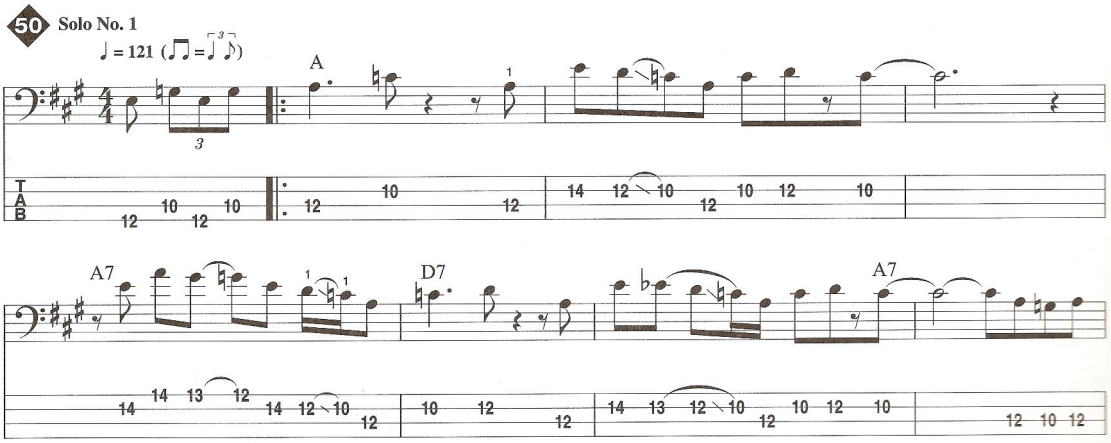
A solo can be approached in several ways:

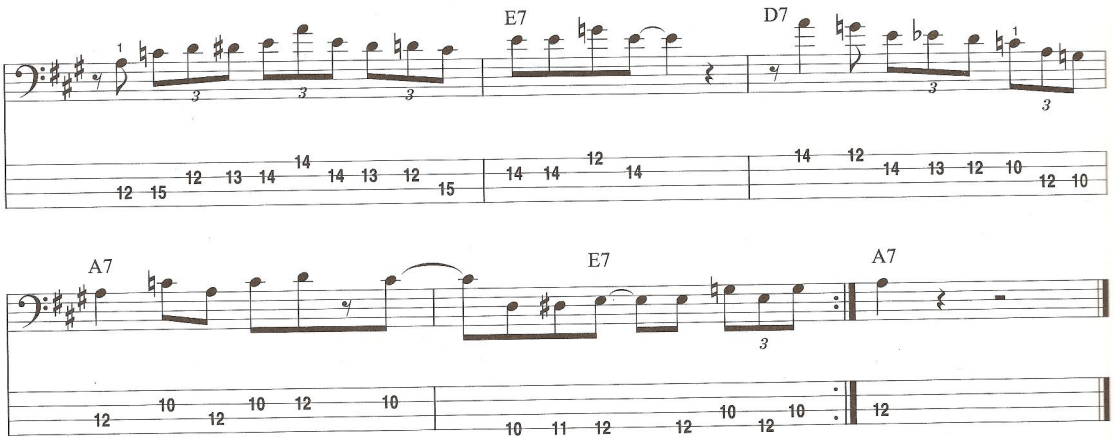
- Often, the most obvious place to begin is with the melody of the tune (just because you're a bass player doesn't mean you don't have to be able to play the melody, especially if you are going to solo!). If you use the melody as the basis for your solo, the listener will make a definite connection between your solo and the tune you are playing.
- Your solo must also make good musical sense. It's always a good idea to start with a motive—a three- or four-note "germ" of a musical idea—and develop it.
- Remember, your solo should tell a story to the listener.
- Keep in mind that a solo is your expression of the music so don't be afraid to put your own personality into it.

If you keep these concepts in mind, your solos will be a lot more interesting than just "playing through the changes."

In this chapter, I have provided you with several solo ideas in various blues styles. Though these solos are each twelve bars long, they are intended to offer you ideas for further development. Learning and practicing these examples will be fun, but the goal is for you to be able to construct your own solos, based on your knowledge, experience, and feelings about the blues.

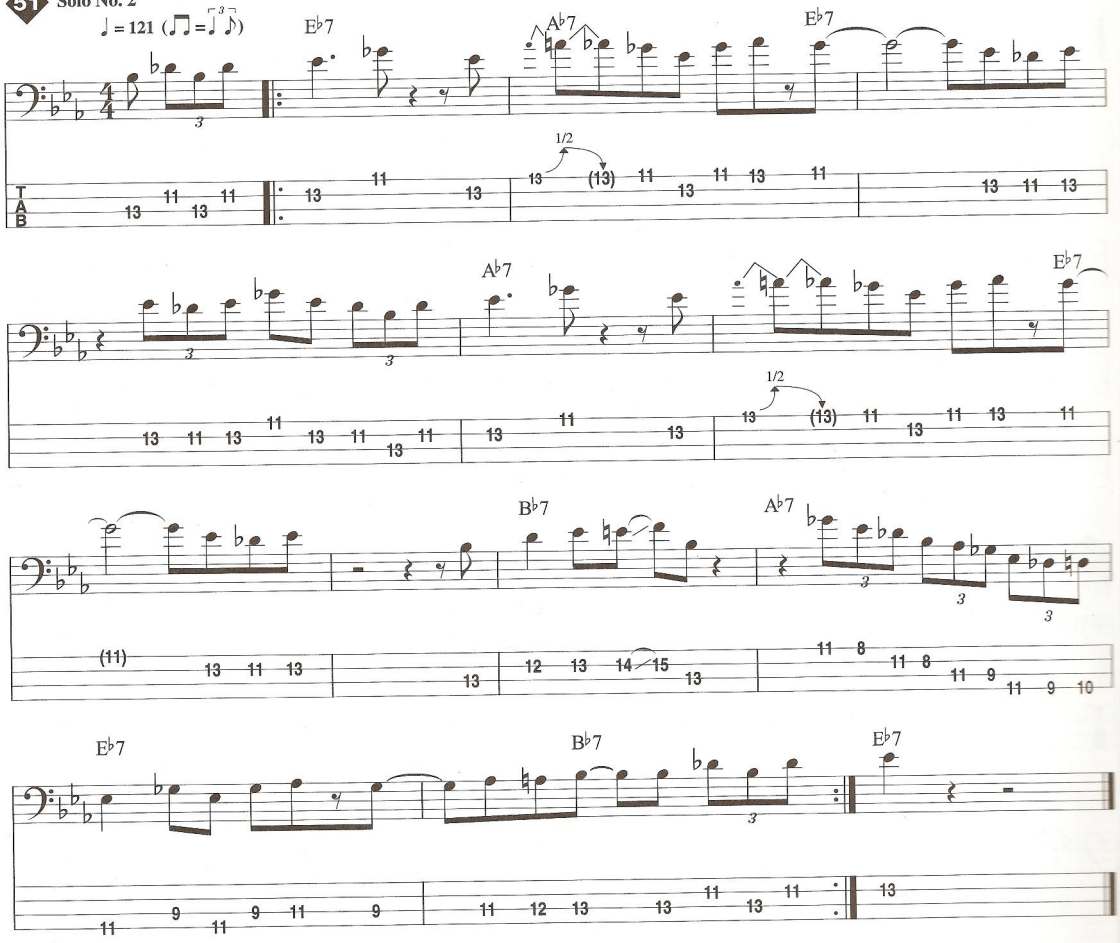
Try combining fragments from different solos in developing your own "story." (You'll probably have to change the keys to make them fit together—that will be good for you!) Write down your ideas in your music notebook. Listen to other players, and learn solo licks and ideas from them. Play your solos into a tape recorder, and analyze what you like and don't like about them. Make friends with a guitar player or a piano player, and work out together with him or her, alternating between keeping time and soloing. The only way to learn something is to jump in and do it. Start with these examples, and take it from there. The sky's the limit. It's up to you!





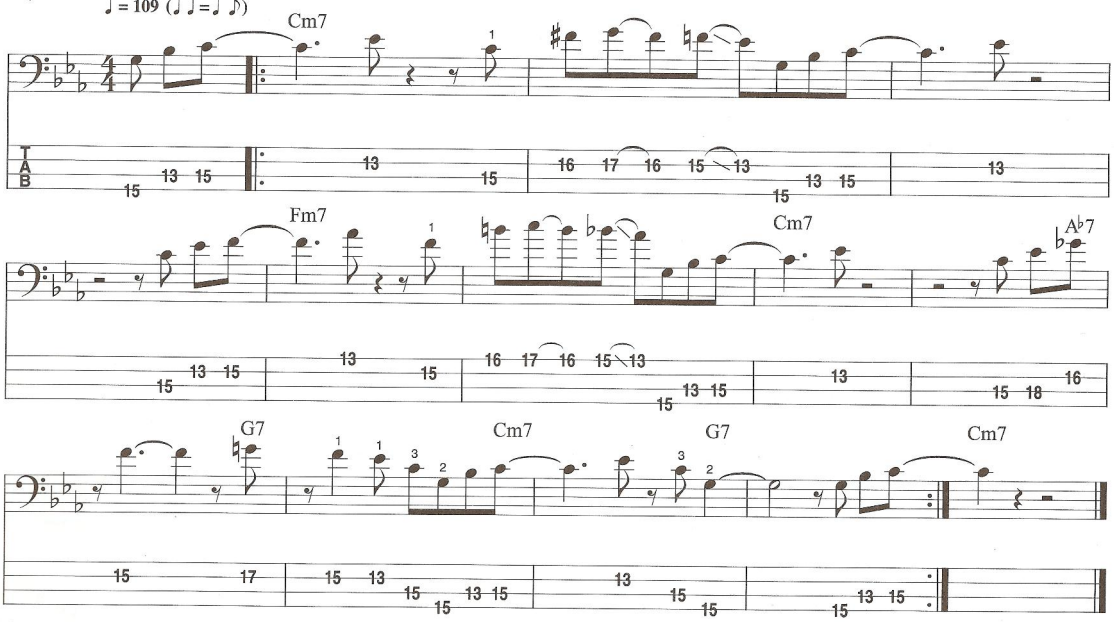
51 **Solo No. 2**

♩ = 121 (♫ = ♩³♪)



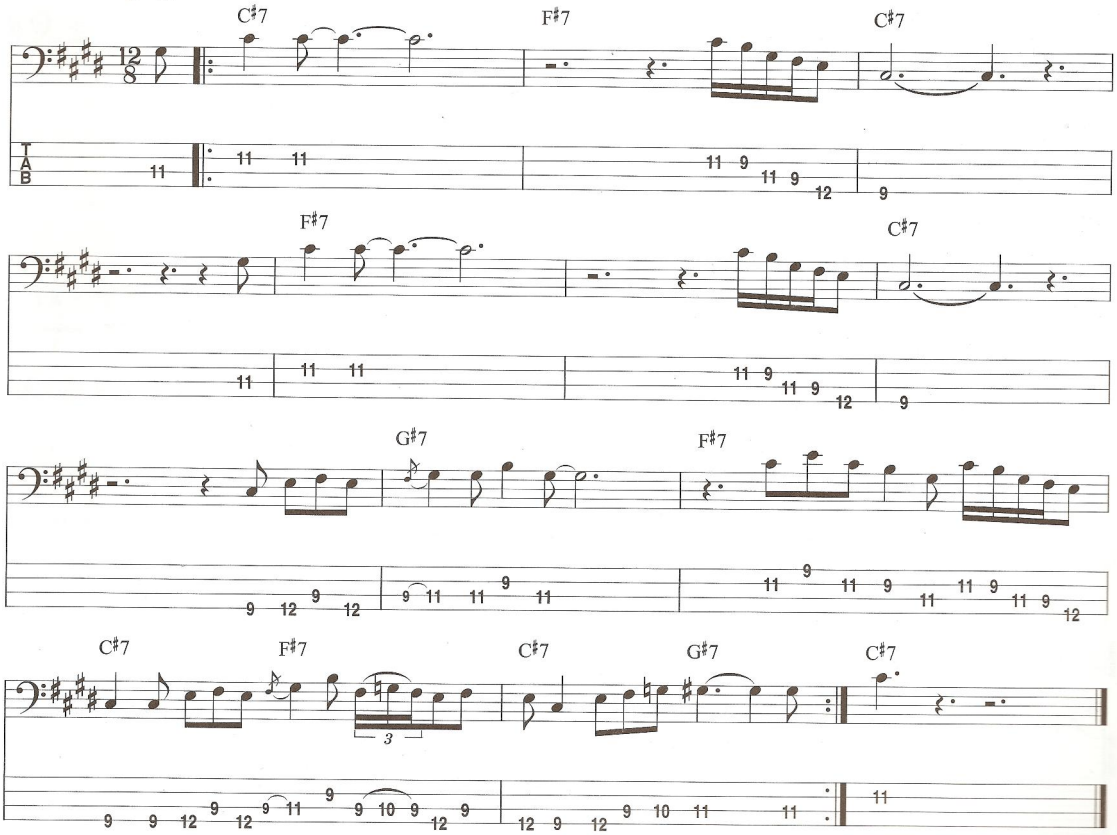
52 Solo No. 3

♩ = 109 (♫ = ♩ 3 ♪)

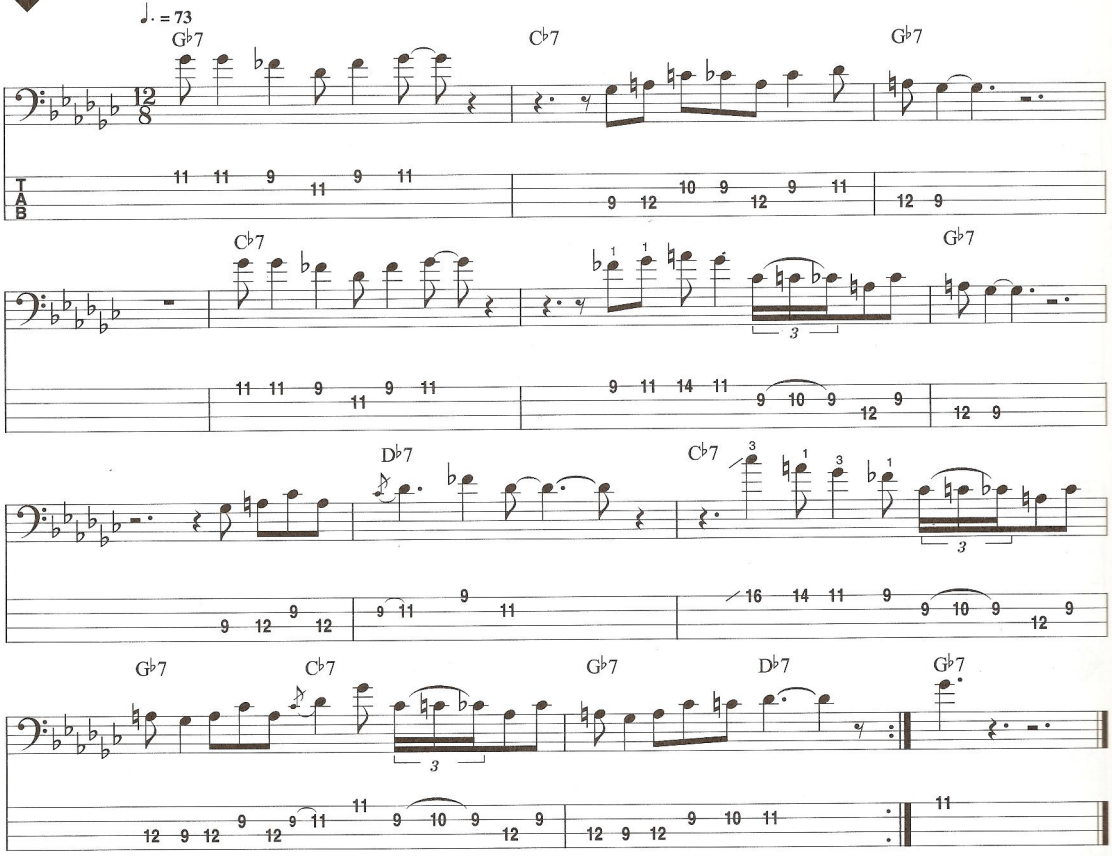


53 Solo No. 4

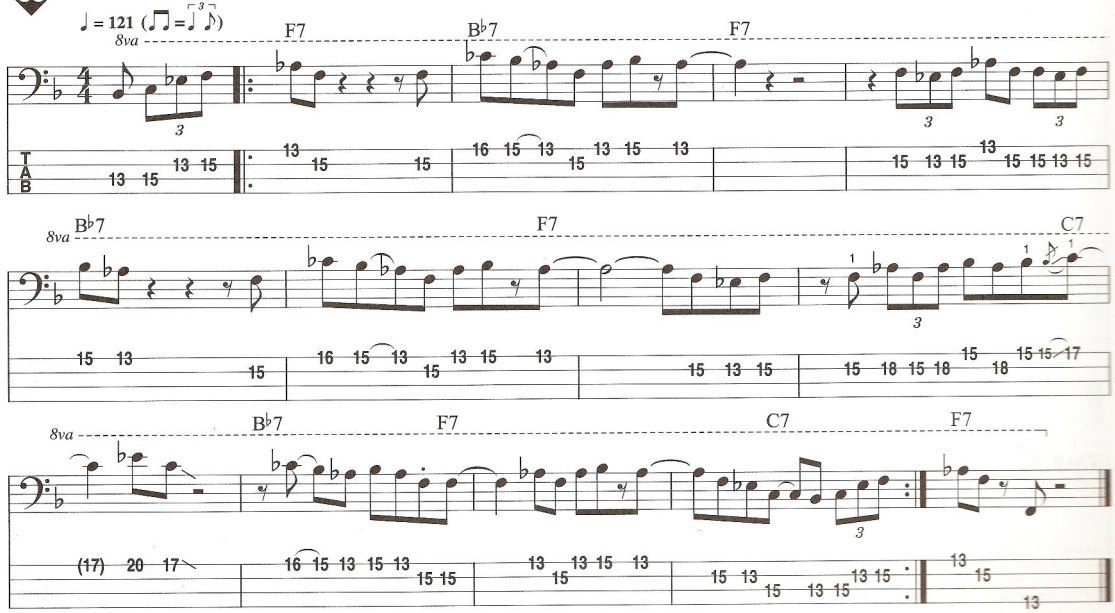
♩. = 73



54 Solo No. 5

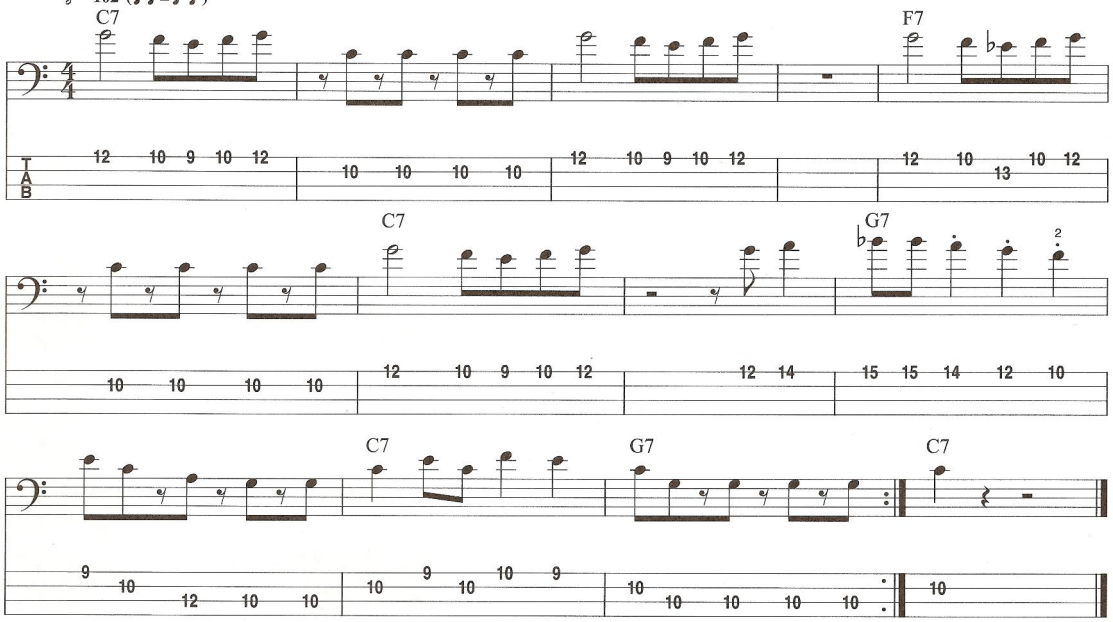


55 Solo No. 6



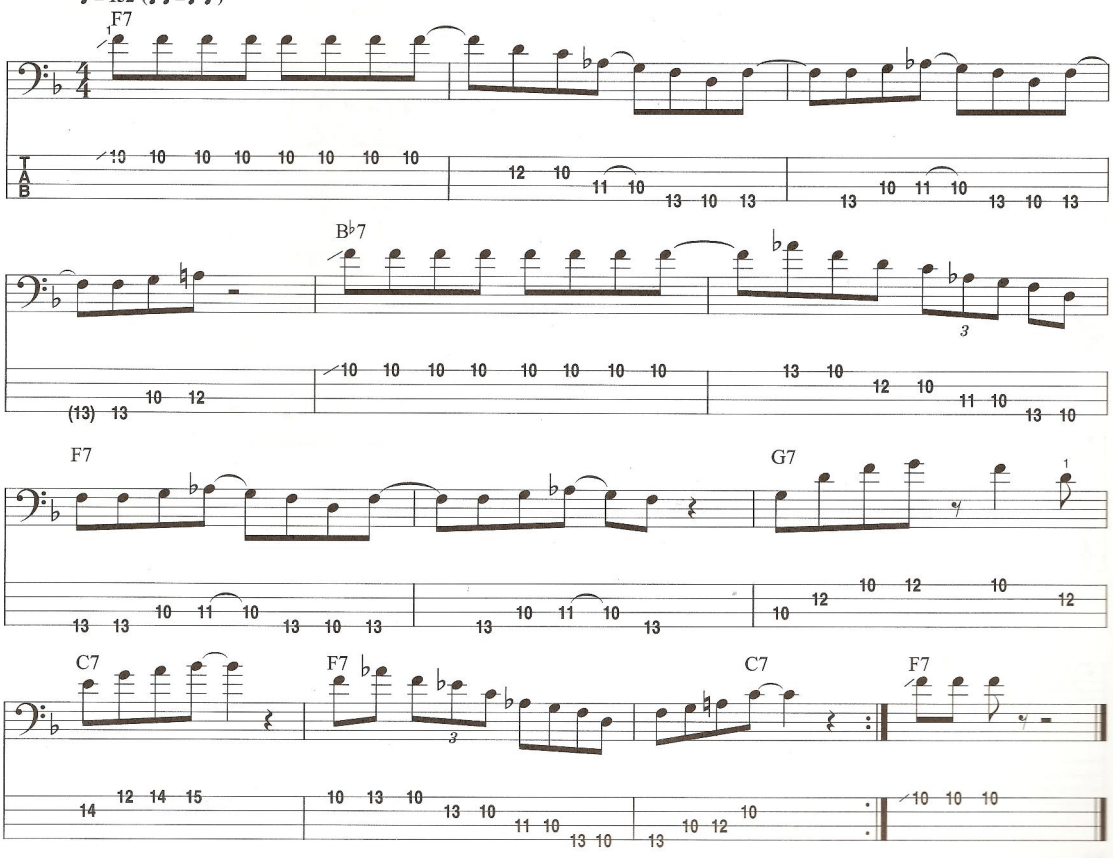
56 Solo No. 7

♩ = 102 (♫ = ³♩♪)



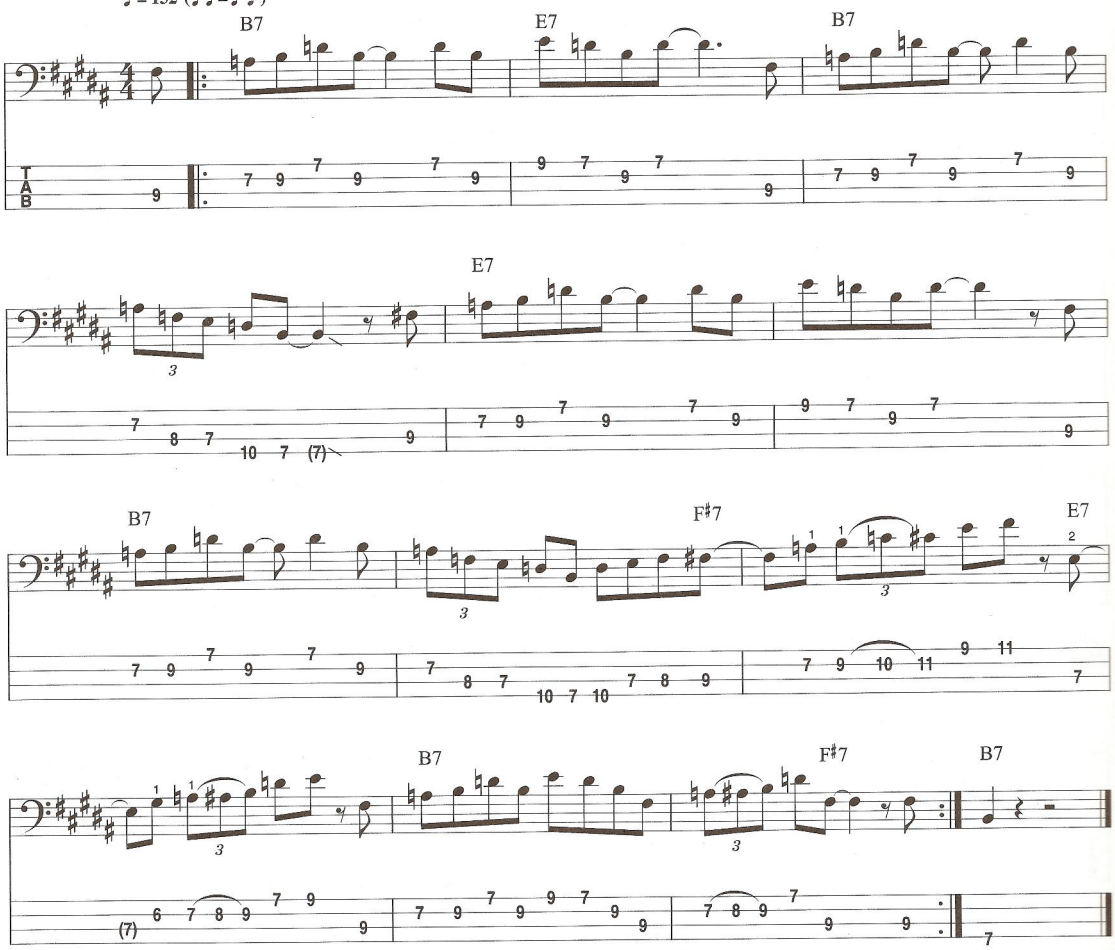
57 Solo No. 8

♩ = 152 (♫ = ³♩♪)



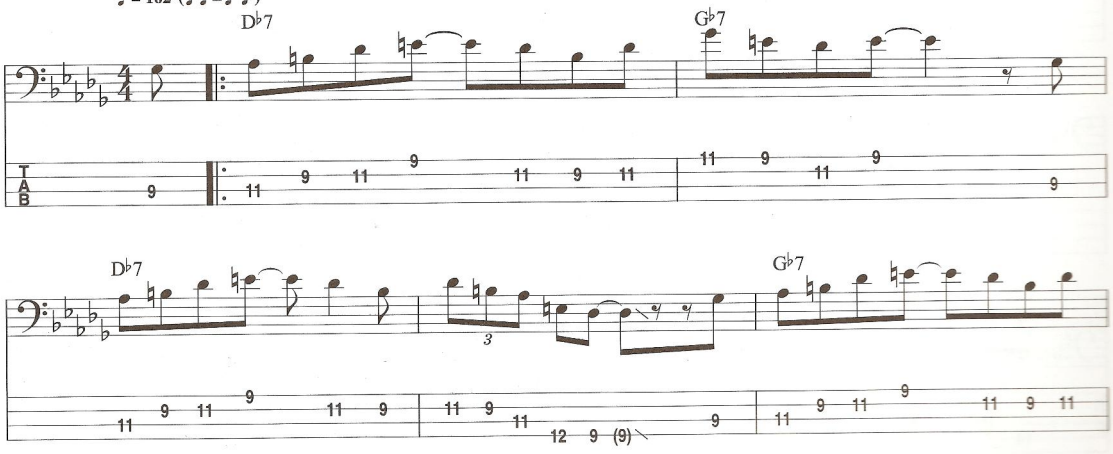
58 Solo No. 9

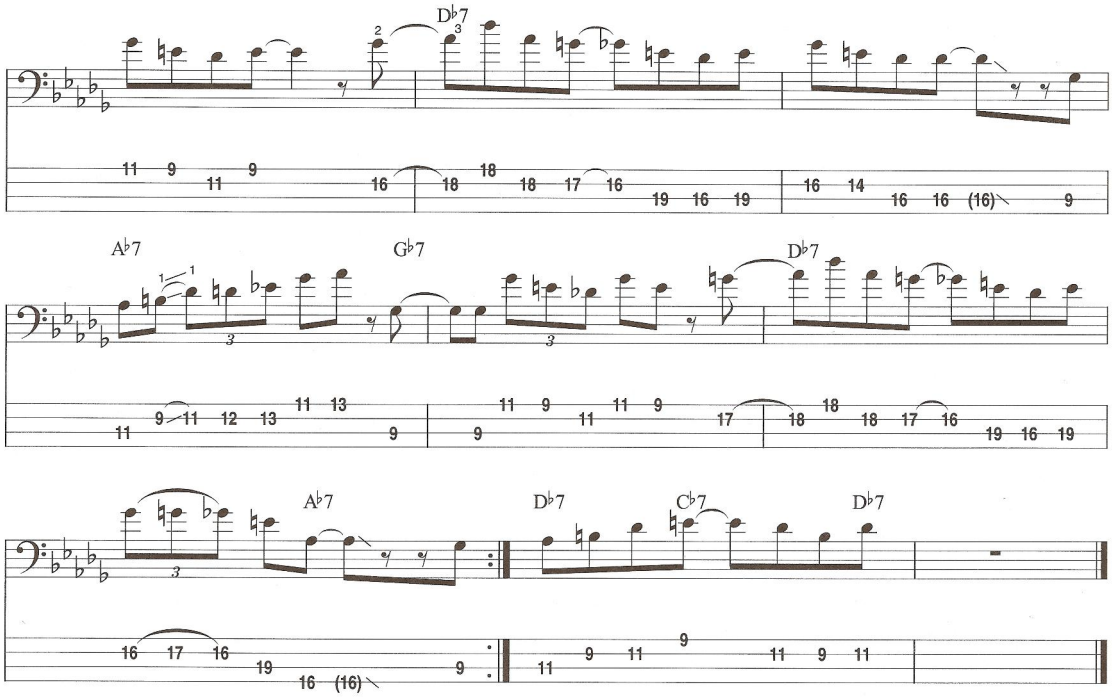
♩ = 152 (♫ = ♩³♪)



59 Solo No. 10

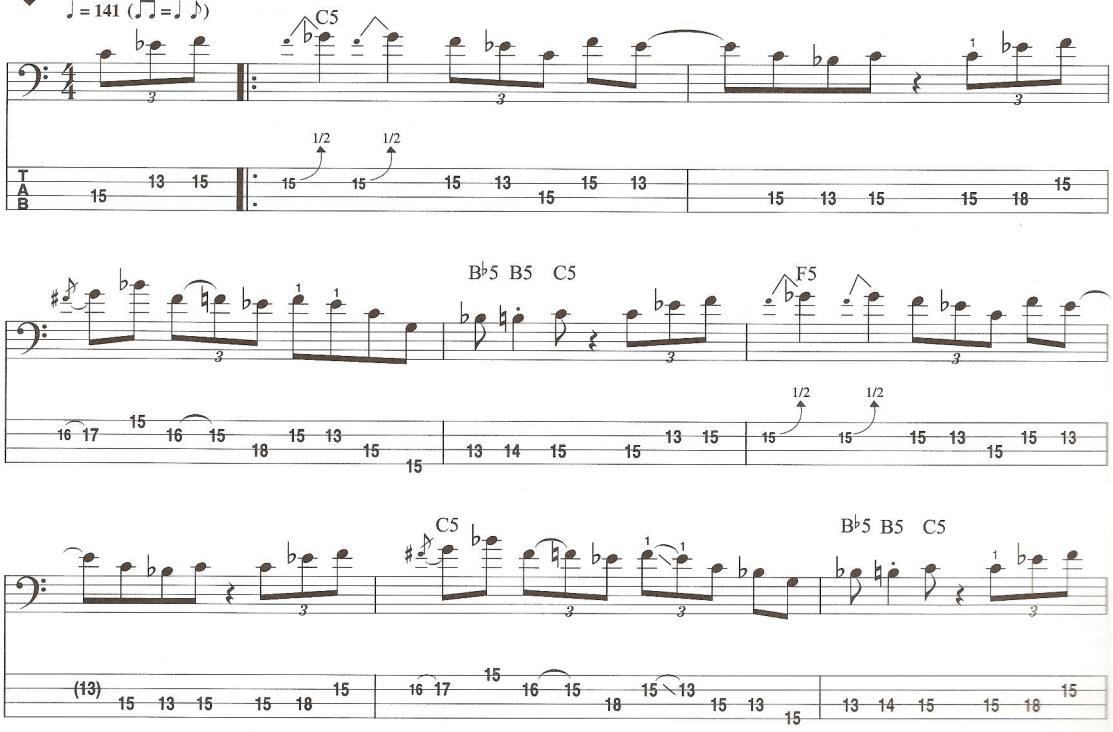
♩ = 162 (♫ = ♩³♪)

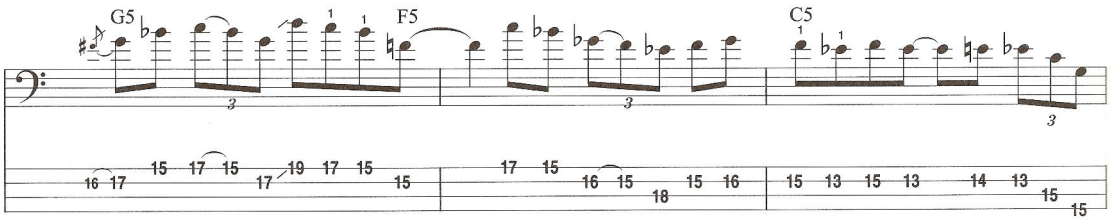


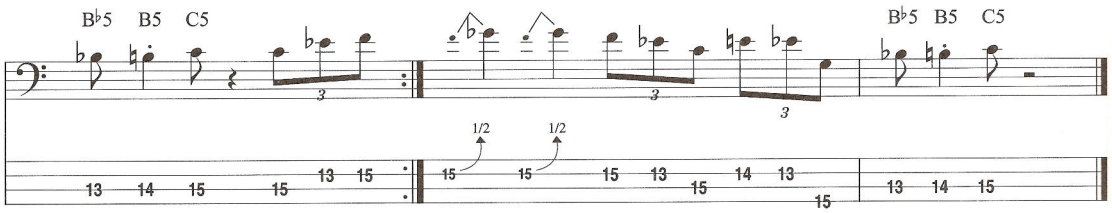


60 **Solo No. 11**

♩ = 141 (♫ = ♩ ♪)

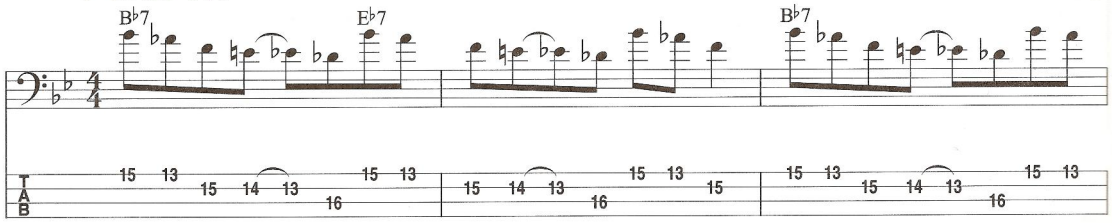


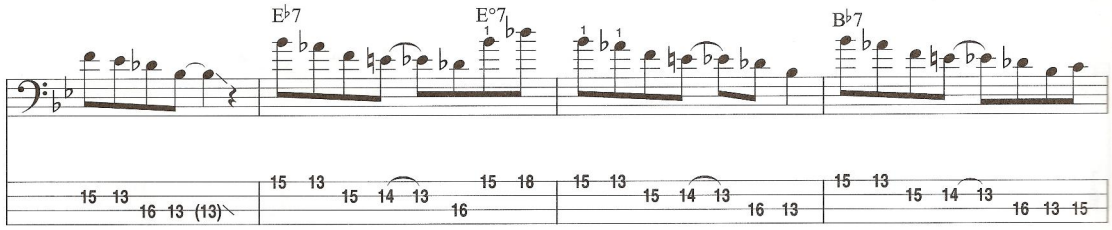


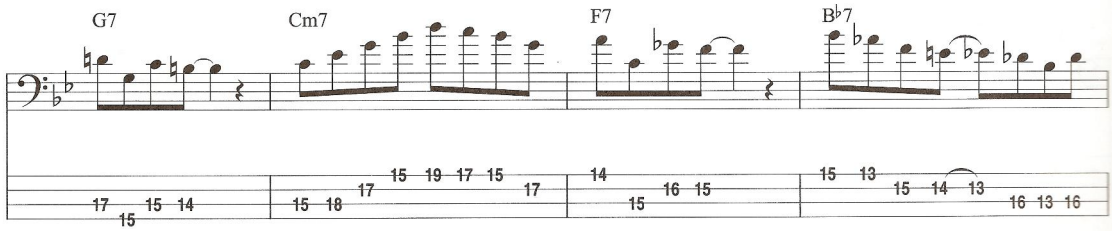


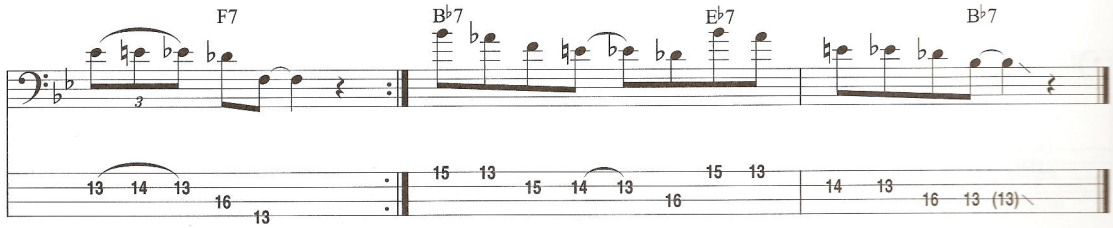
61 **Solo No. 12**

♩ = 157 (♫ = ♩³♪)



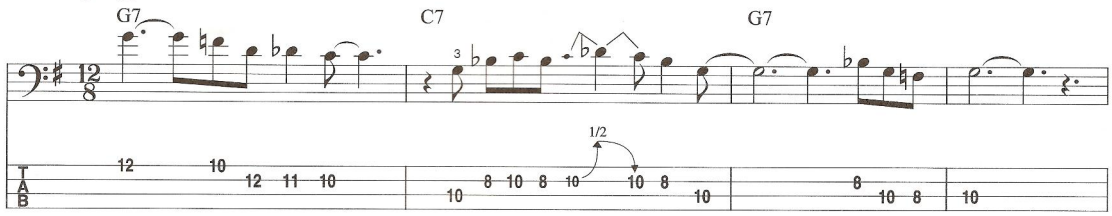


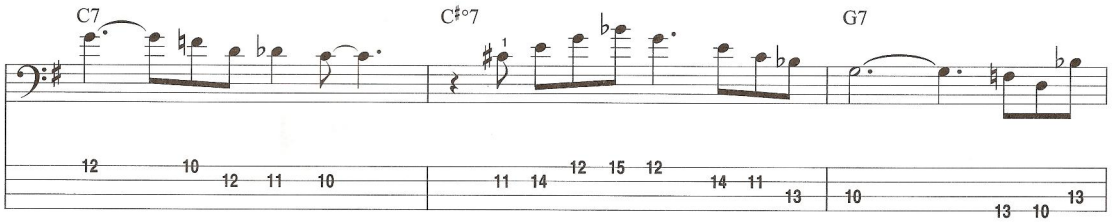


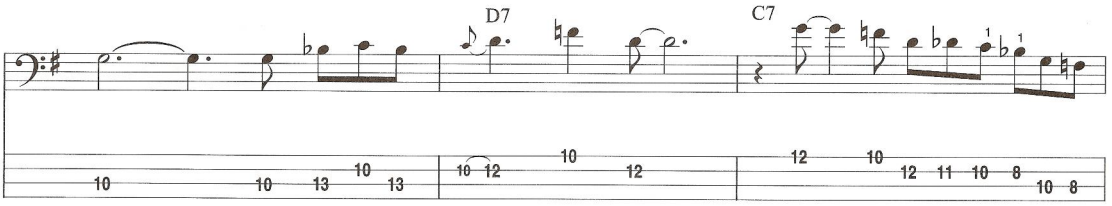


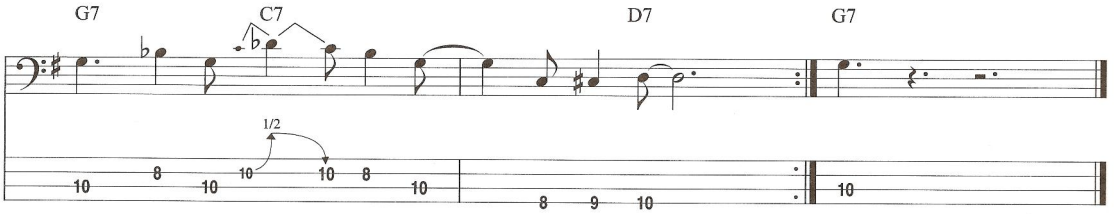
62 Solo No. 13

♩. = 81



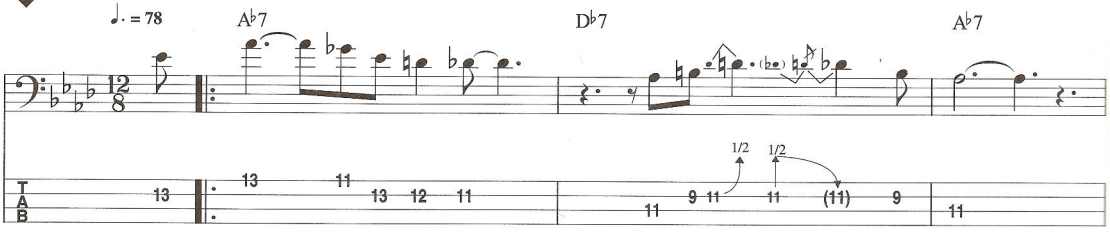


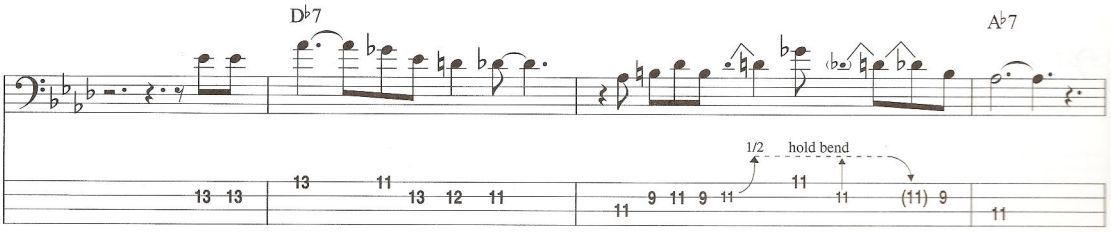


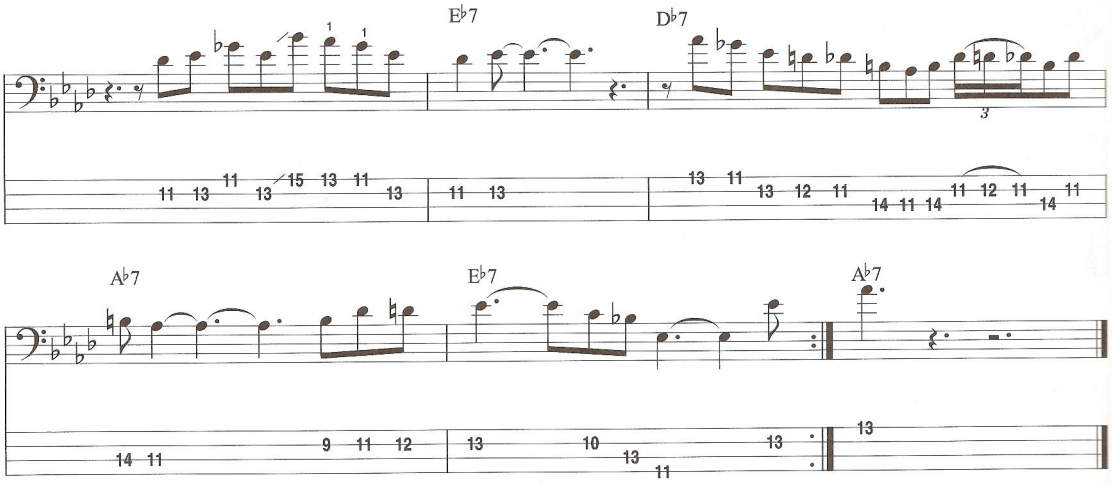


63 Solo No. 14

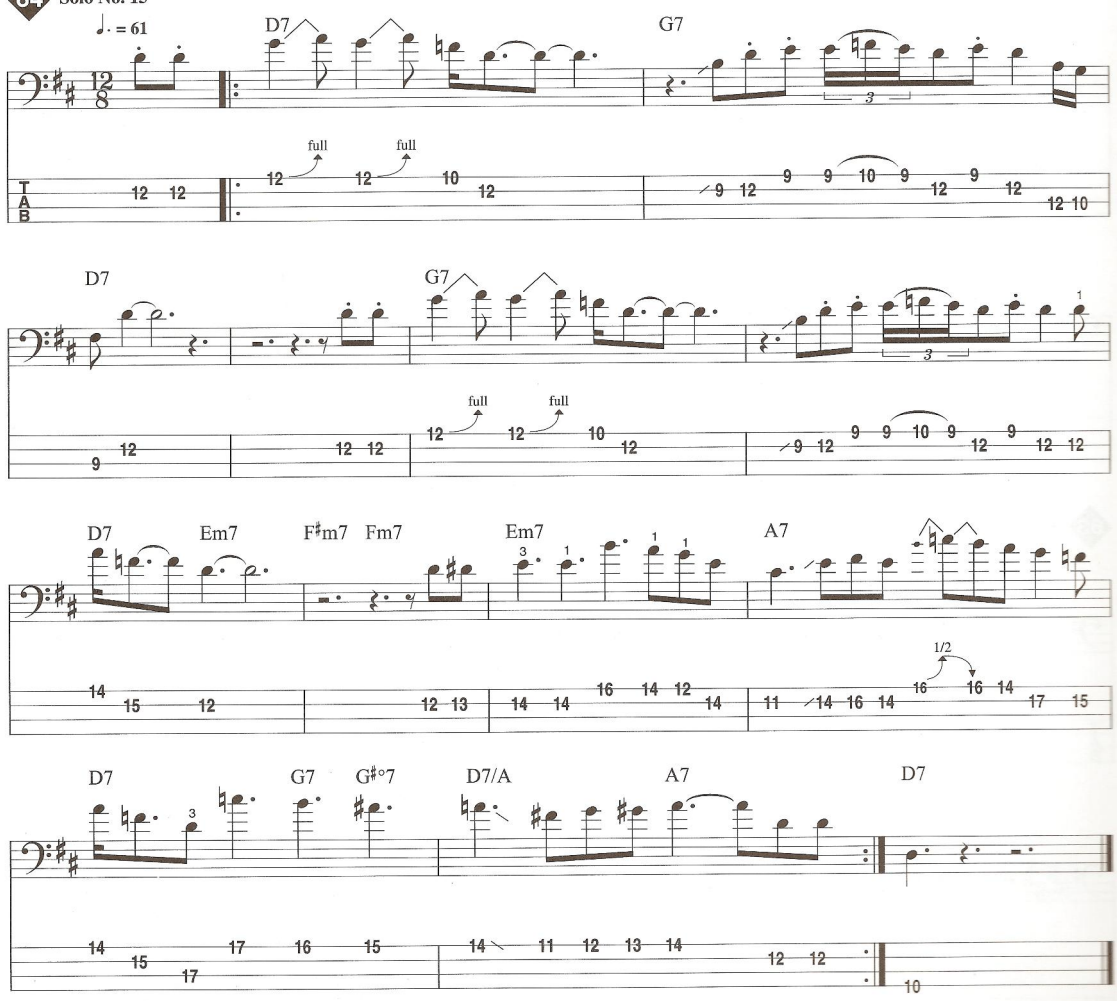
♩. = 78

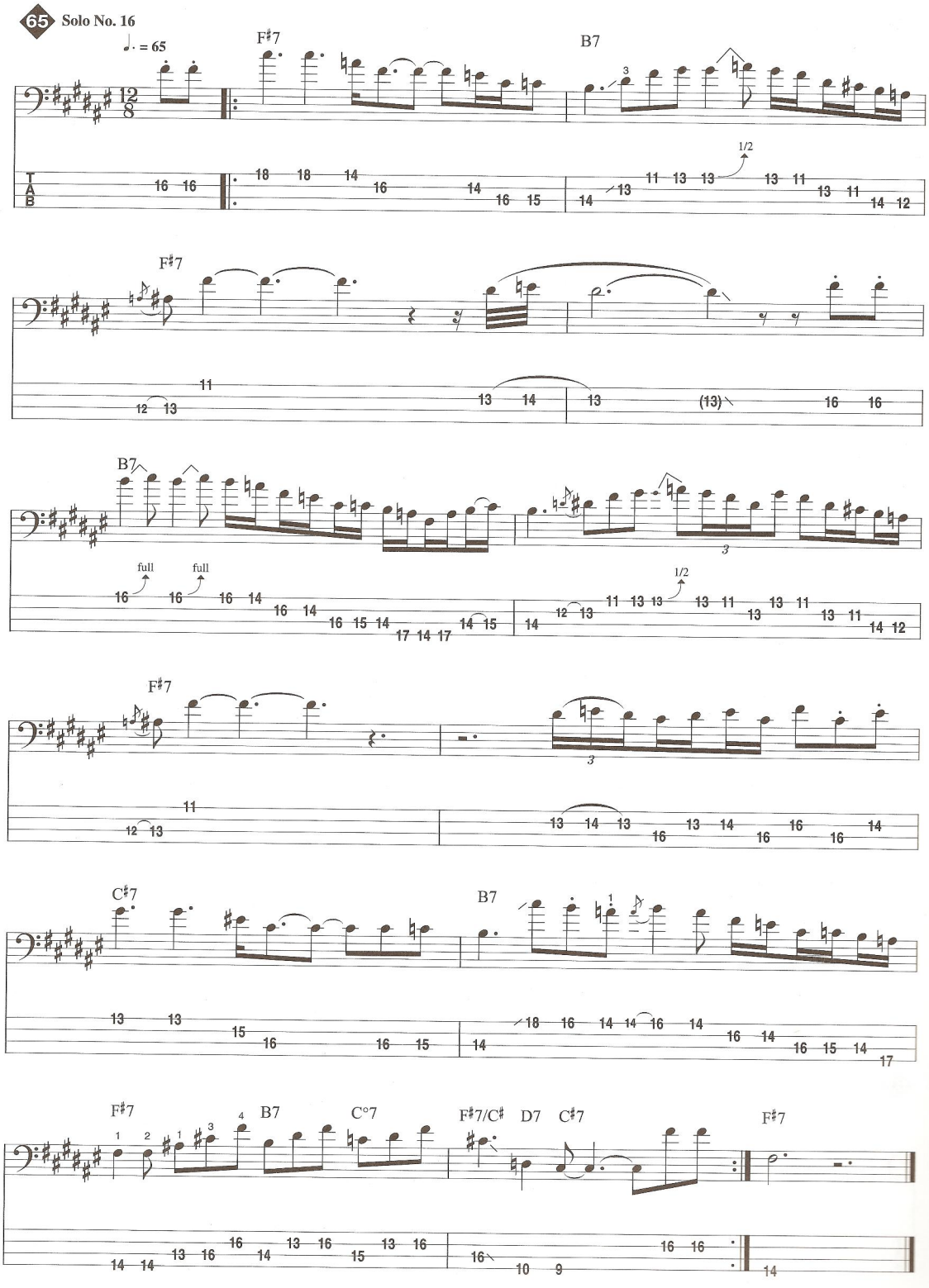





E♭7
D♭7
A♭7
E♭7
A♭7

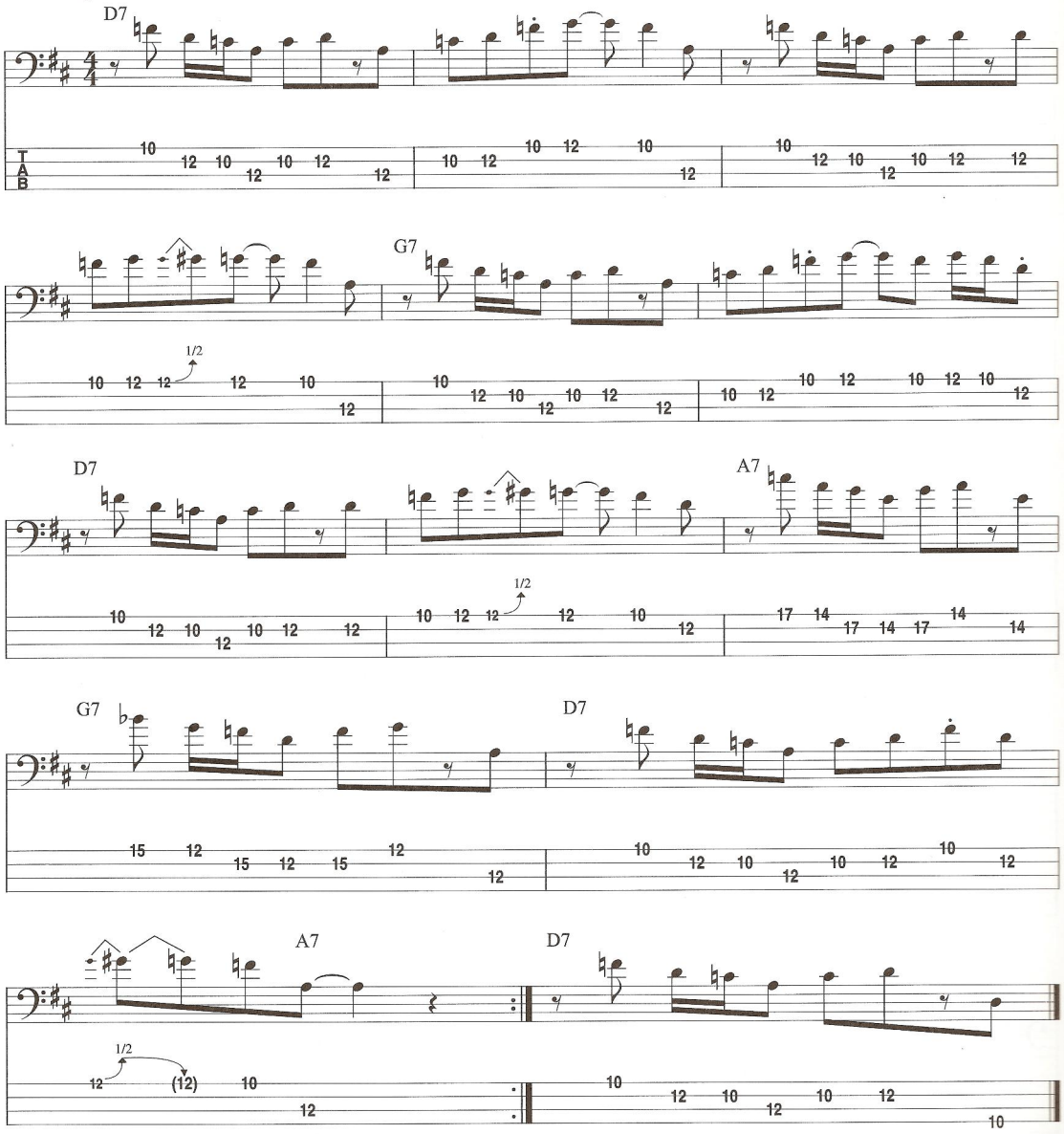
64 **Solo No. 15**


♩. = 61
D7
G7
full
full
D7
G7
full
full
D7
Em7
F♯m7
Fm7
Em7
A7
1/2
D7
G7
G♯°7
D7/A
A7
D7


65 Solo No. 16
♩. = 65
F♯7
B7
F♯7
B7
full
full
1/2
F♯7
C♯7
B7
F♯7
B7
C°7
F♯7/C♯
D7
C♯7
F♯7

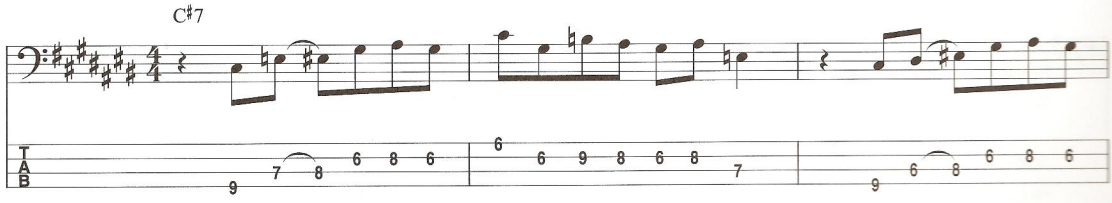
66 Solo No. 17

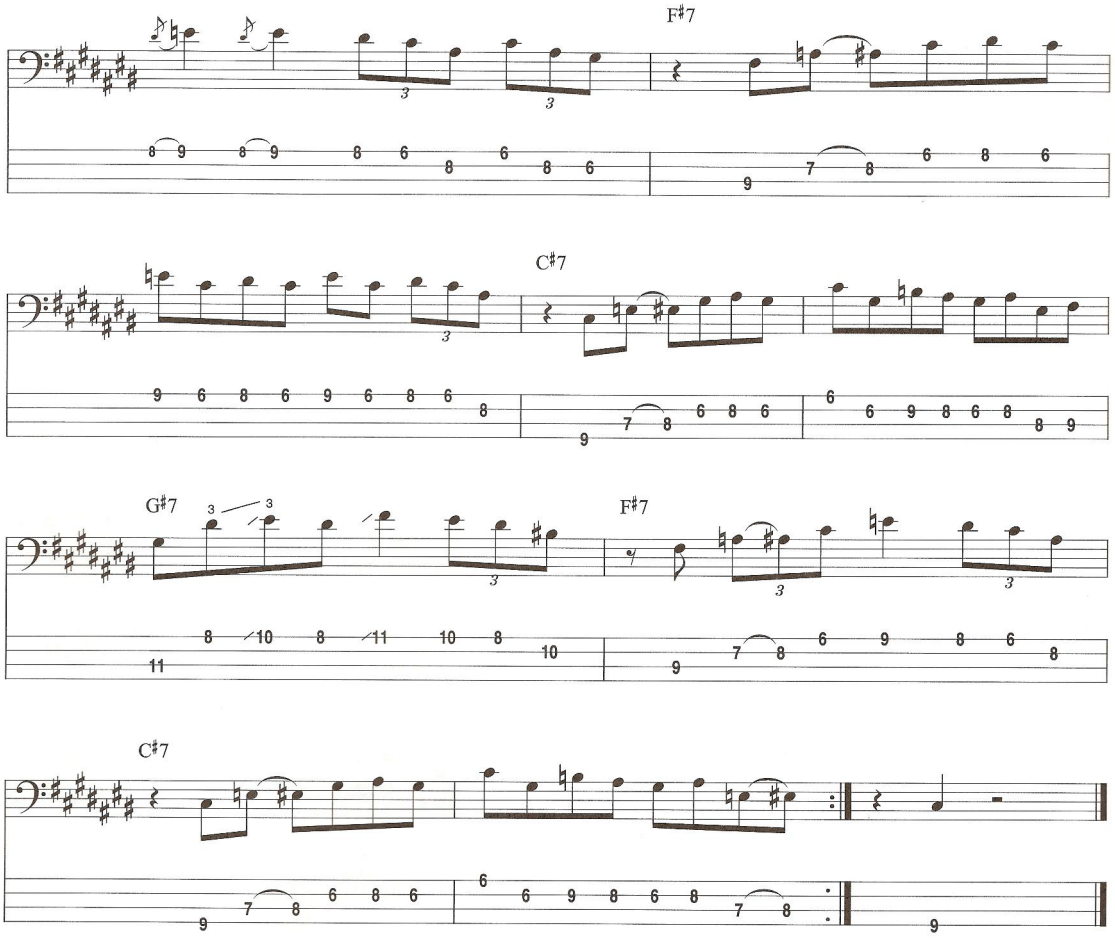
♩ = 121



67 Solo No. 18

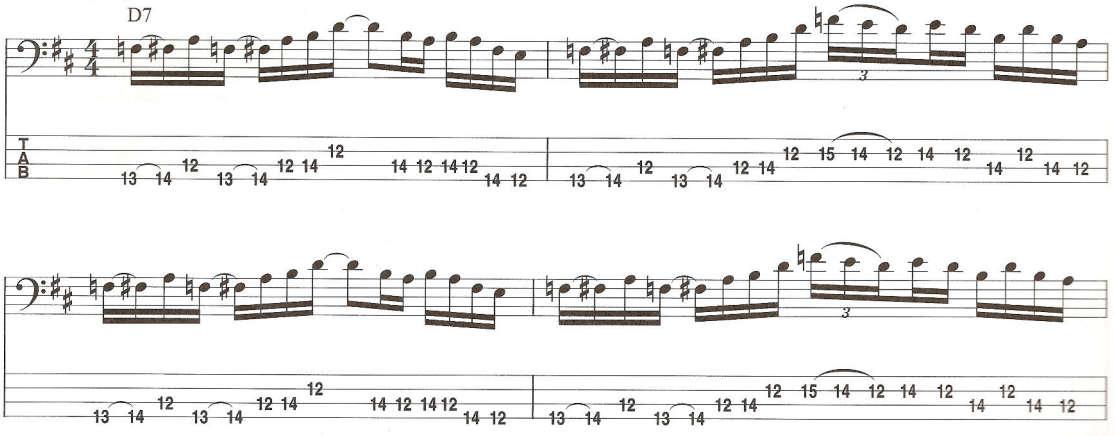
♩ = 132 (♫ = ♩³♪)

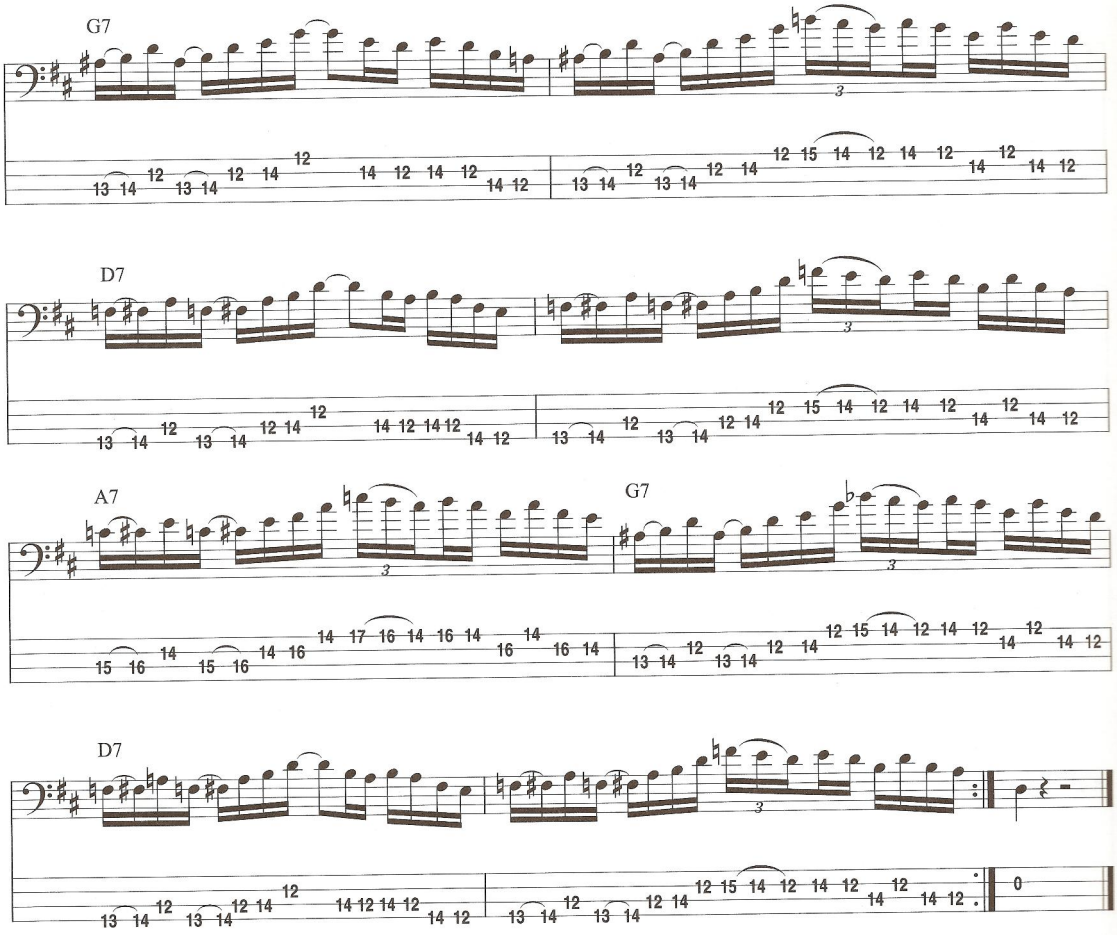




68 **Solo No. 19**

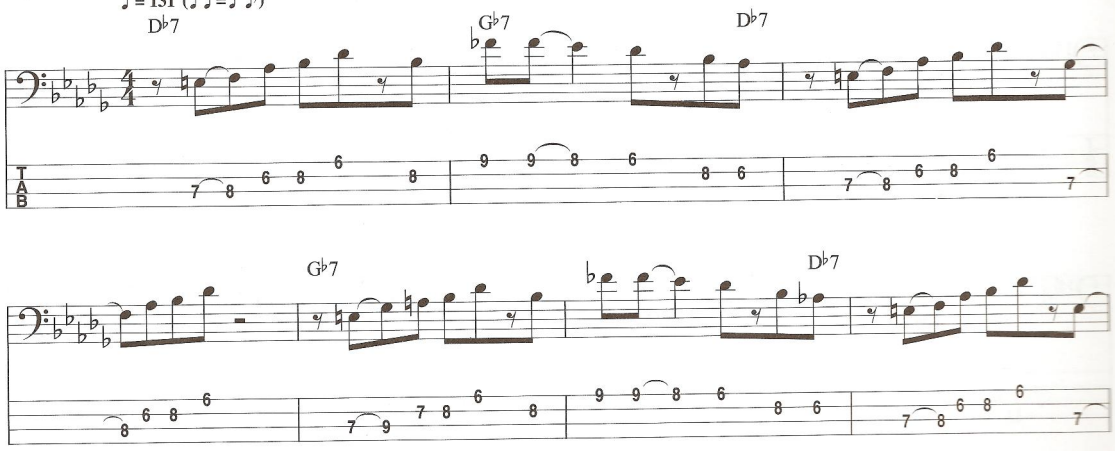
♩ = 81

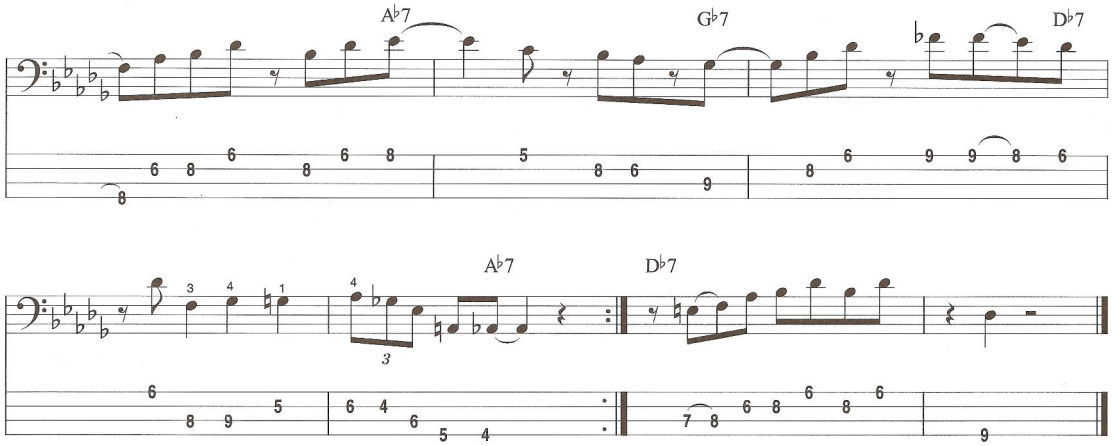




69 **Solo No. 20**

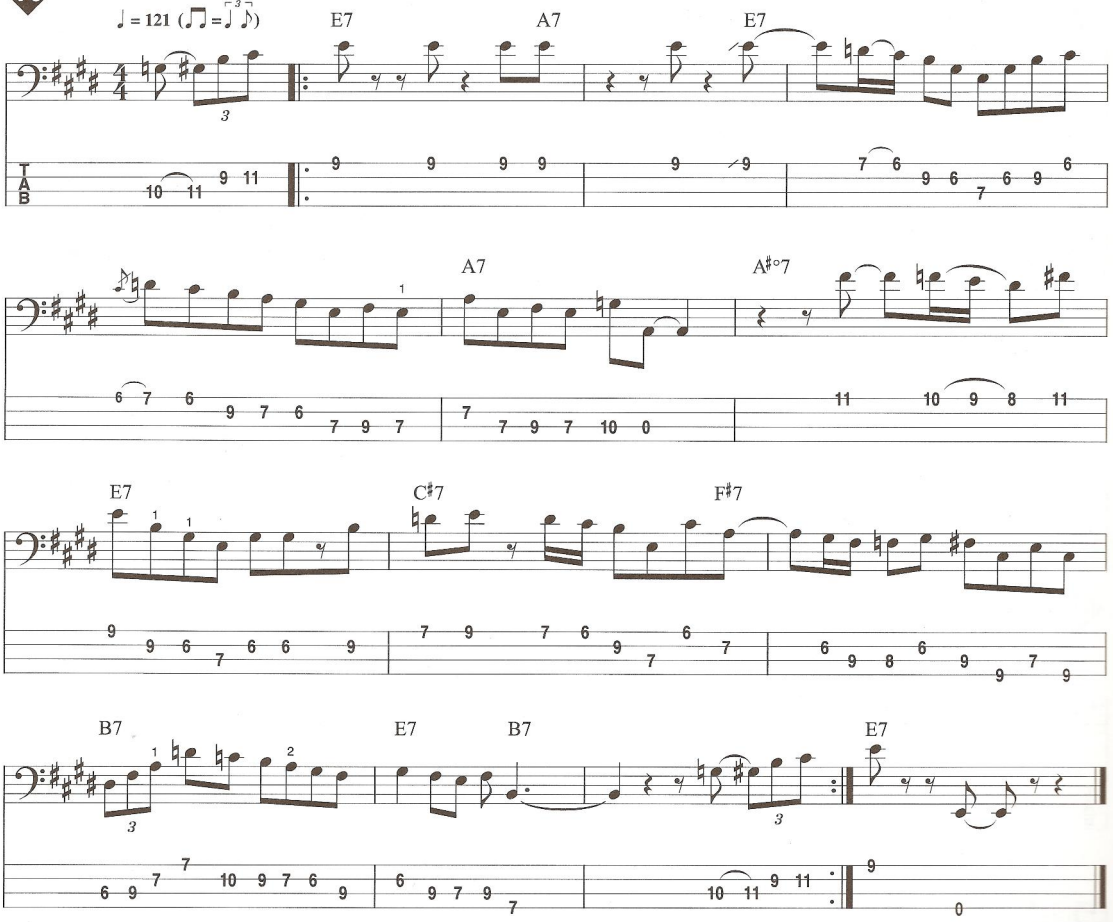
♩ = 131 (♫ = ♩ ♪)





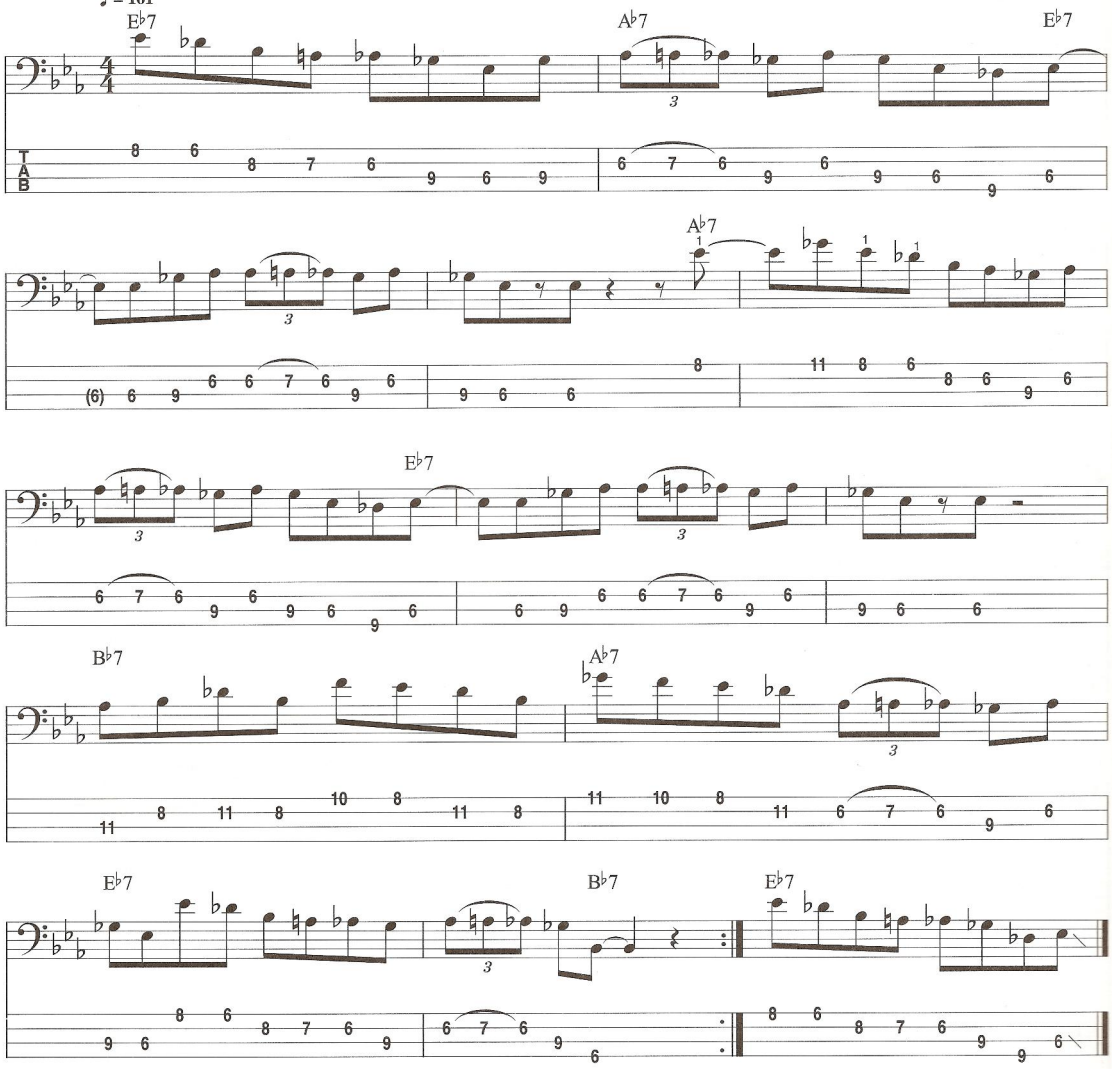
70 **Solo No. 21**

♩ = 121 (♫ = ♩³♪)



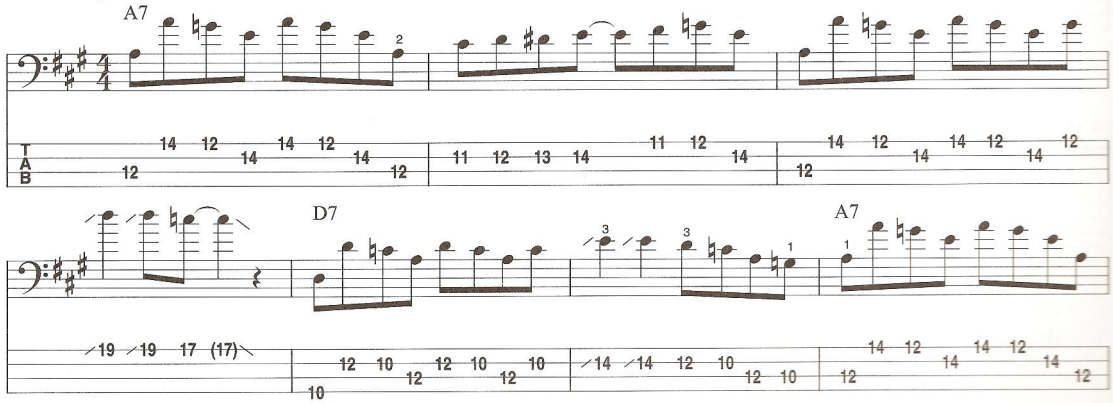
71 Solo No. 22

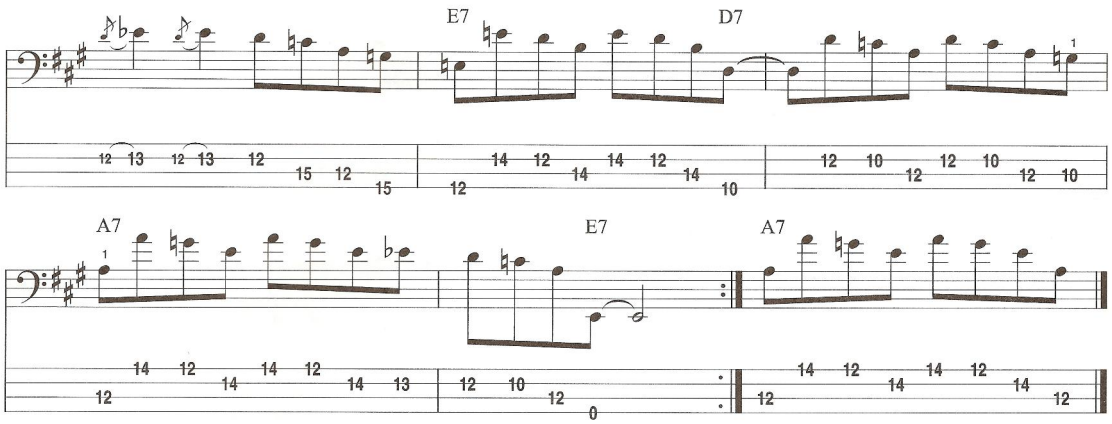
♩ = 161



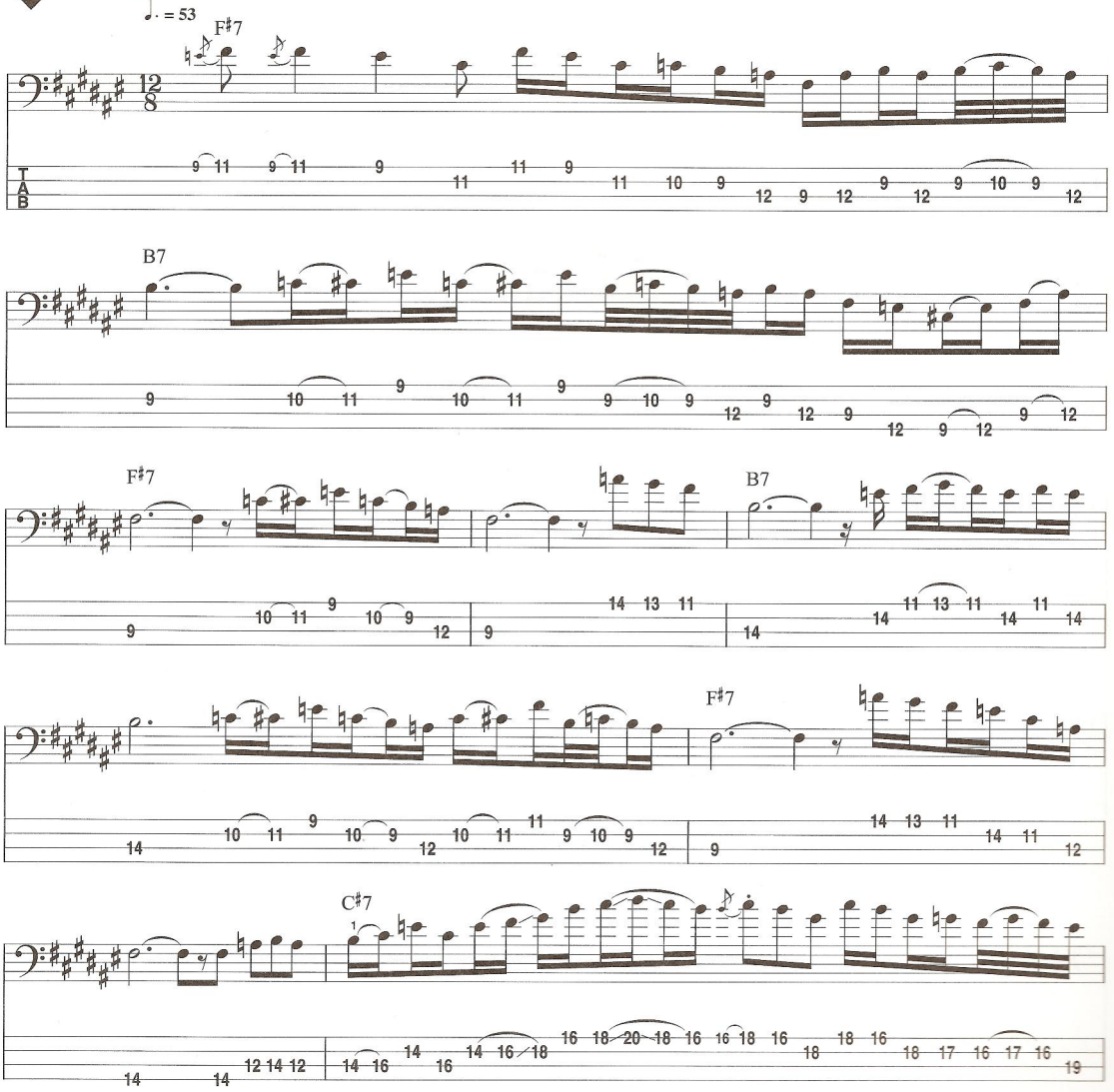
72 Solo No. 23

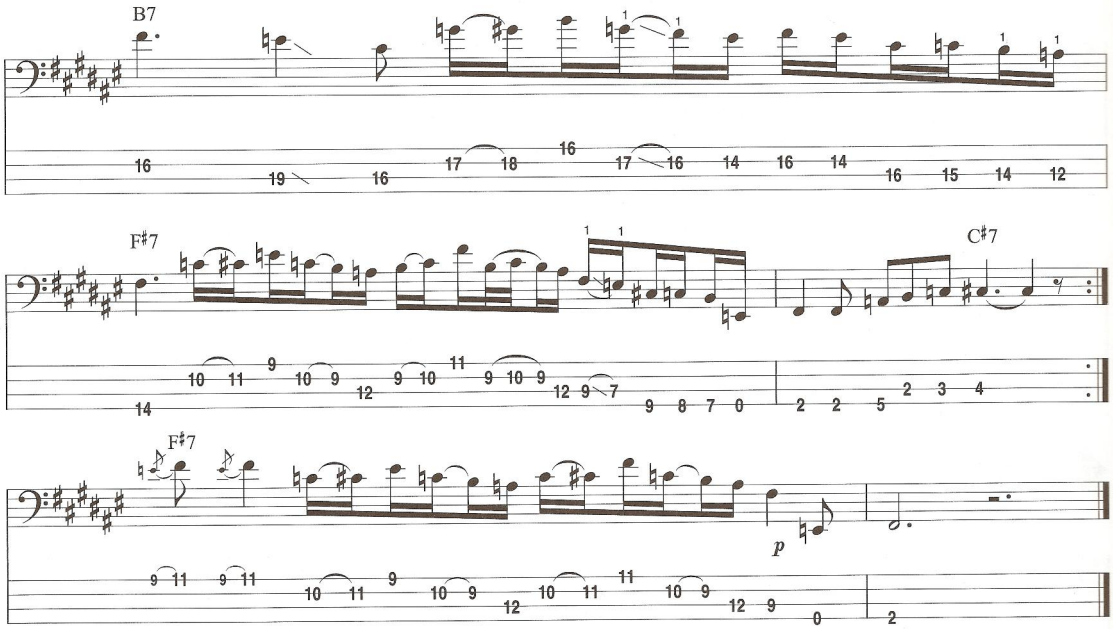
♩ = 173





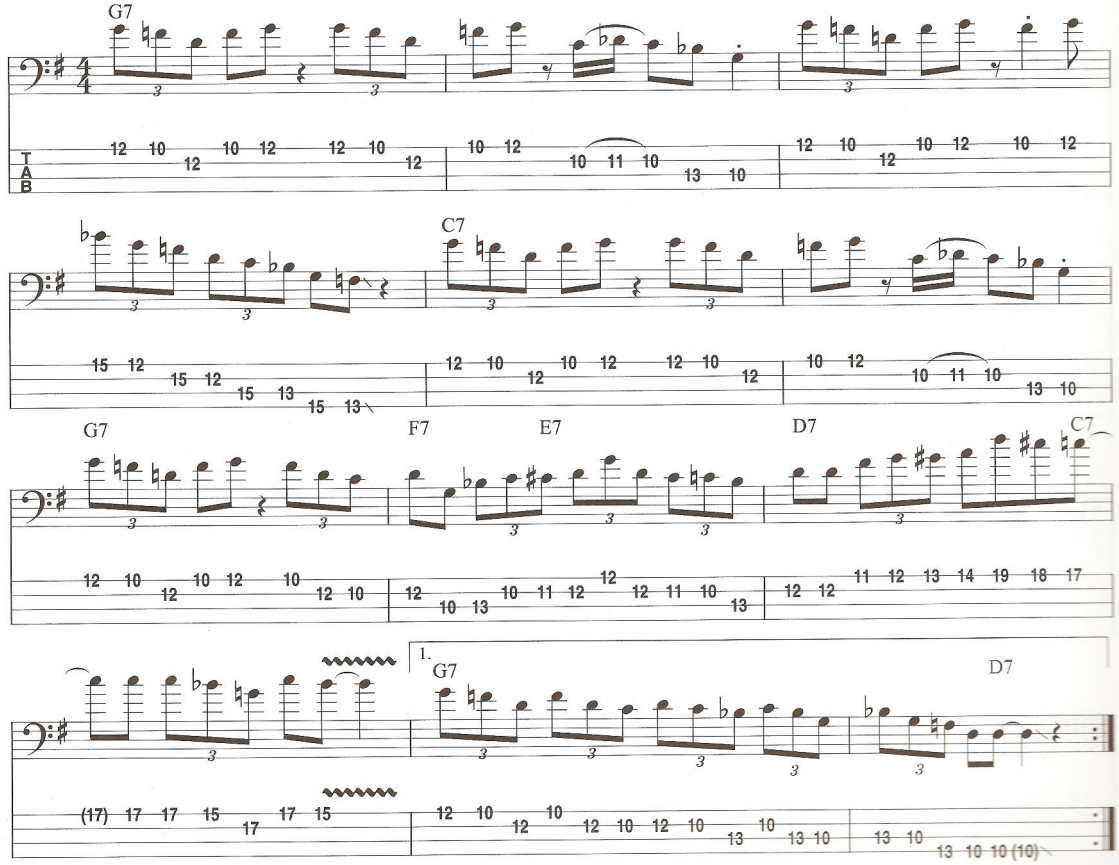
73 Solo No. 24

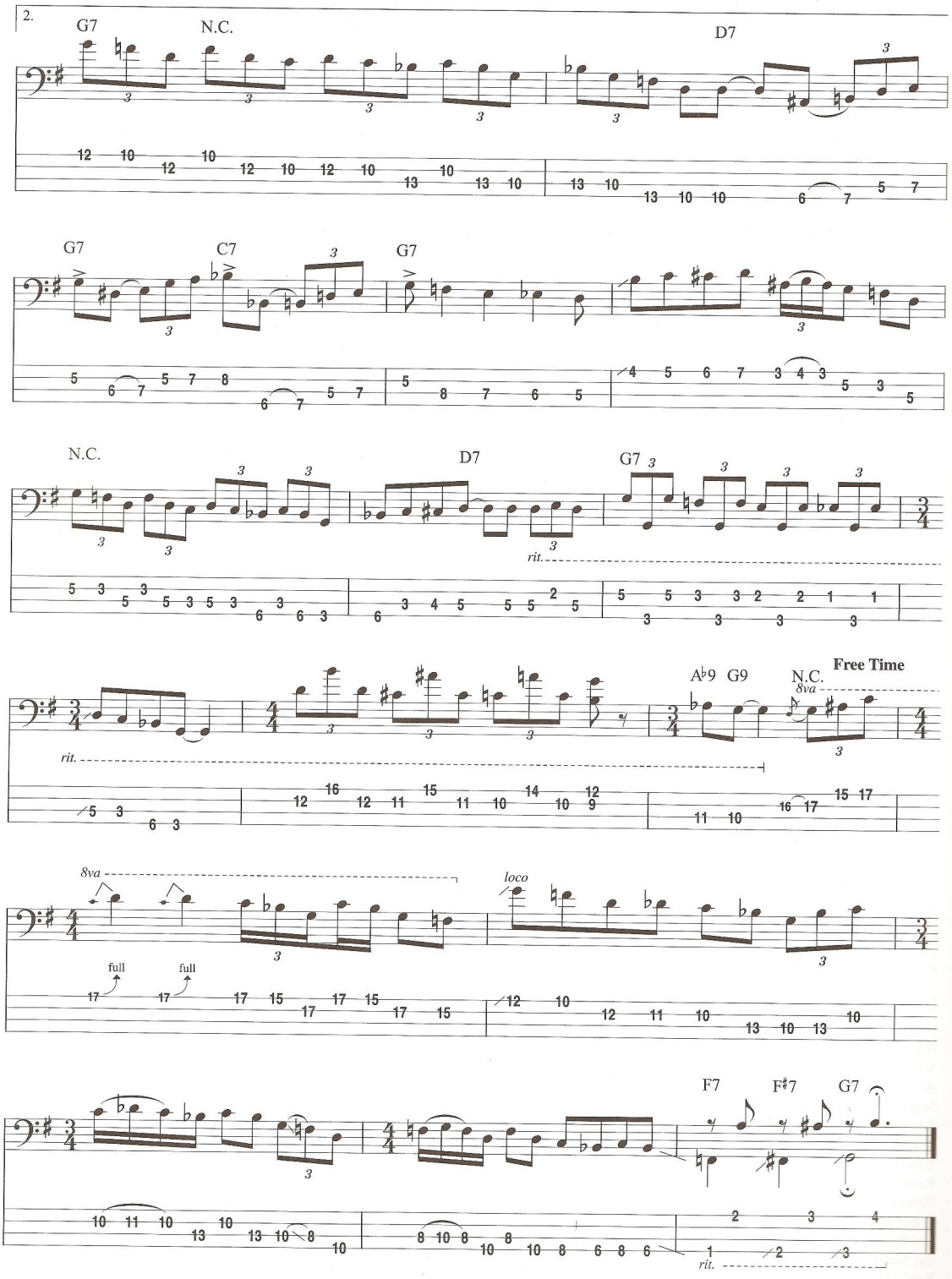




74 **Solo No. 25**

♩ = 143 (♫ = ♩³♪)




2.
G7
N.C.
D7
G7
C7
G7
N.C.
D7
G7
rit.
A♭9
G9
N.C.
8va
Free Time
rit.
8va
loco
full
full
F7
F♯7
G7
rit.

RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Sure, I think the CD that comes with this book is authentic, entertaining, and enjoyable. But if you really want to understand the blues and play the blues, you've got to listen to the blues. With so many great blues recordings available, the opportunity to hear almost a hundred years of genuine blues as recorded by the true blues singers and players—the heroes of the blues—is most easily accessible.

With the popularity of the blues at an unprecedented high, virtually all of the major record labels, including BMG, Capitol-EMI, Warner Bros., Columbia/Legacy, MCA, Polygram/Verve, and others, cater to blues enthusiasts. Many smaller labels, like Alligator, Chess, Rounder, Schoolkids, Chesky, Mosaic, Okeh, Rhino, Sugar Hill, and Abco, have extensive blues catalogs, too. It's not difficult to find all kinds of blues compilations specializing in everything from Delta, New Orleans, or Chicago blues, to slide guitar, piano, or harmonica blues, or even gospel, zydeco, or Christmas blues.

With this list, I am offering you a source of great blues artists you can listen to in order to understand and enjoy many different styles of the blues. This collection of blues greats traces the history of the blues from the early blues singers and the Mississippi Delta through the blues migration, boogie woogie, jazz, rock 'n' roll, and beyond. To help you gain some additional chronological perspective, I have also included the year of birth (and death, where appropriate) for each of the musicians listed, as well as what year each of the bands was formed. You may also notice that some artists and/or bands may be found in more than one category.

Wherever possible, I've highlighted the influential bassists from the various blues styles. Obviously, there is no mention of any bass players in the Delta blues category, for example, since that style is most often associated with the lone bluesman with his guitar. By the time we reach rock 'n' roll and the British invasion of the '60s, however, the list of notable bass players is quite extensive. It is interesting to watch the list get longer as the blues evolves over the years.

In addition to recordings, make a point to find some blues shows on the radio. Chances are, no matter where you live, you're bound to find at least one or two. Also, be on the lookout for any blues festivals that may be coming to your area, or to an area to which you're willing to travel. Finally, when you're in a blues-intensive city (like, say, Chicago, for one), if you can't find a place to go hear some good blues, you're just not trying!

Seek out the blues. Find the blues. Listen to the blues!

THE BLUES SINGERS

Ida Cox (1896-1967)
Etta James (1938-)
Mahalia Jackson (1911-1972)
Memphis Minnie (1897-1973)
Gertrude "Ma" Rainey (1886-1939)
Bessie Smith (1894-1936)
Mamie Smith (1883-1946)
Koko Taylor (1935-)
Big Mama Thornton (1926-1984)
Sippie Wallace (1898-1986)
Dinah Washington (1924-1963)
Ethel Waters (1896-1977)

DELTA AND ACOUSTIC BLUES

Ishman Bracey (1901-1970)
Big Bill Broonzy (1893-1958)
Willie Brown (1900-1952)
Bob Dylan (1941-)
John Hammond, Jr. (1942-)
Son House (1902-1988)
Skip James (1902-1969)
Blind Lemon Jefferson (1897-1929)
Robert Johnson (1911-1938)
Tommy Johnson (1896-1956)
Rubin Lacy (1901-1972)
Leadbelly (1888-1949)
Taj Mahal (1942-)
Keb' Mo' (1952-)
Charley Patton (1887-1934)
Bukka White (1906-1977)
Josh White (1914-1969)

TEXAS BLUES

Alger "Texas" Alexander (1900-1955)
Black Ace, The (1905-1972)
Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown (1924-)
Albert Collins (1932-1993)
Fabulous Thunderbirds (formed 1974)
Lightnin' Hopkins (1912-1982)
Blind Lemon Jefferson (1897-1929)
Blind Willie Johnson (1902 or 1903-1949)
Delbert McClinton (1940-)
Jimmie Vaughan (1951-)
Stevie Ray Vaughan (1954-1990)
Johnny Winter (1943-)
ZZ Top (formed 1969)

Bassists

Roscoe Beck (Robben Ford, Eric Johnson)
Keith Ferguson (The Fabulous Thunderbirds)
Johnny B. Gayden (Albert Collins)
Dusty Hill (ZZ Top)
Tommy Shannon (Stevie Ray Vaughan, Johnny Winter)

NEW ORLEANS BLUES

James Booker (1939-1983)
Dr. John (1940-)
Fats Domino (1928-)
Earl King (1934-)
Professor Longhair (Henry Roeland Byrd) (1918-1980)
Huey "Piano" Smith (1934-)
Allen Toussaint (1938-)

BLUES IN GEORGIA AND THE CAROLINAS

Blind Blake (1890s-1930s)
Reverend Blind Gary Davis (1896-1972)
Blind Boy Fuller (1907-1941)
Peg Leg Howell (1888-1966)
Blind Willie McTell (1901-1959)

WEST COAST BLUES

Charles Brown (1920-1999)
Pee Wee Crayton (1914-1985)
Lowell Fulson (1921-1999)
Aaron "T-Bone" Walker (1910-1975)
Johnny "Guitar" Watson (1935-1996)

CHICAGO BLUES

Scrapper Blackwell (1903-1962)
Big Bill Broonzy (1893-1958)
Lonnie Brooks (1933-)
Paul Butterfield (1942-1987)
James Cotton (1935-)
Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup (1905-1974)
Willie Dixon (1915-1992)
Buddy Guy (1936-)
Howlin' Wolf (1910-1976)
Elmore James (1918-1963)
Lonnie Johnson (1889-1970)
Freddie King (1934-1976)
Little Walter (1930-1968)
Robert Lockwood, Jr. (1915-)
Magic Sam (1937-1969)

Charlie Musselwhite (1944-)
Robert Nighthawk (1909-1967)
Otis Rush (1934-)
Johnny Shines (1915-1992)
Tampa Red (1904-1981)
Koko Taylor (1935-)
Muddy Waters (1915-1983)
Junior Wells (1934-1998)
Big Joe Williams (1903-1982)
Sonny Boy Williamson I (1914-1948)
Sonny Boy Williamson II (1899-1965)
Jimmy Yancey (1898-1951)

Bassists

Big Crawford (Muddy Waters)
Willie Dixon (The Big Three Trio)
Noel Neal (James Cotton)
Greg Rzab (Buddy Guy)

BOOGIE WOOGIE

Albert Ammons (1907-1949)
Cow Cow Davenport (1894-1955)
John Lee Hooker (1920-)
Pete Johnson (1904-1967)
Meade Lux Lewis (1905-1964)
Pine Top Smith (1904-1929)
Big Joe Turner (1911-1985)

JAZZ

Instrumentalists

Julian "Cannonball" Adderley (1928-1975)
Louis Armstrong (1901-1971)
Count Basie (1904-1984)
Sidney Bechet (1897-1959)
Buddy Bolden (1877-1931)
Charlie Christian (1916-1942)
John Coltrane (1926-1967)
Chick Corea (1941-)
Miles Davis (1926-1991)
Duke Ellington (1899-1974)
Dizzy Gillespie (1917-1993)
Benny Goodman (1909-1986)
Coleman Hawkins (1901-1969)
Woody Herman (1913-1987)
Louis Jordan (1908-1975)
Jay McShann (1916-)
Glenn Miller (1904-1944)
Jelly Roll Morton (1890-1941)
Bennie Moten (1894-1935)
Charlie Parker (1920-1955)
Oscar Peterson (1925-)
Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson (1917-1988)
Ben Webster (1909-1973)
Lester Young (1909-1959)

Vocalists

Mose Allison (1927-)
Nat King Cole (1919-1965)
Billie Holiday (1915-1959)
Jimmy Rushing (1903-1972)
Dinah Washington (1924-1963)

Bassists

Jimmy Blanton (Duke Ellington)
Ray Brown (Oscar Peterson)
Ron Carter (Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, McCoy Tyner)
Paul Chambers (Miles Davis, John Coltrane)
Stanley Clarke (Return to Forever, solo artist)
Marc Johnson (Stan Getz, Bill Evans)
Scott LaFaro (Bill Evans)
Christian McBride (Kenny Kirkland, Bennie Green)
George Mraz (Tommy Flanagan)
Walter Page (The Blue Devils, Count Basie)

ROCK 'N' ROLL

Allman Brothers Band (formed 1969)
Chuck Berry (1926-)
Blues Project (formed 1965)
Canned Heat (formed 1966)
Bo Diddley (1928-)
Bob Dylan (1941-)
Fabulous Thunderbirds (formed 1974)
J. Geils Band (formed 1967)
Grateful Dead (formed 1965)
Jimi Hendrix (1942-1970)
Buddy Holly (1936-1959)
Janis Joplin (1943-1970)
Jerry Lee Lewis (1935-)
Little Richard (1935-)
Elvis Presley (1935-1977)
Bonnie Raitt (1949-)
Rush (formed 1969)
Santana (formed 1967)
Bob Seger (1945-)
Jimmie Vaughan (1951-)
Stevie Ray Vaughan (1954-1990)
Johnny Winter (1943-)
ZZ Top (formed 1969)

Bassists

Oteill Burbridge (Allman Brothers Band)
Chris Campbell (Bob Seger)
Phil Chen (Jeff Beck)
Willie Dixon (Chuck Berry, others)
Keith Ferguson (Fabulous Thunderbirds)
Larry Graham (Sly & the Family Stone)
Dusty Hill (ZZ Top)
James Jamerson (Motown)
Daniel Klein (J. Geils Band)
Geddy Lee (Rush)
Phil Lesh (Grateful Dead)
Noel Redding (Jimi Hendrix)
Tommy Shannon (Stevie Ray Vaughan, Johnny Winter)
Larry Taylor (Canned Heat)
Allen Woody (Allman Brothers Band)

BRITISH ROCK

The Animals (formed 1962)
The Beatles (formed 1960)
Jeff Beck (1944-)
Cream (formed 1966)
Eric Clapton (1945-)
Fleetwood Mac (formed 1967)
Rory Gallagher (1949-1995) (actually from Ireland)
Led Zeppelin (formed 1968)
John Mayall (1933-)
The Rolling Stones (formed 1962)
Savoy Brown (formed 1966)
Ten Years After (formed 1967)
The Yardbirds (formed 1963)

Bassists

Jack Bruce (Cream)
Chas Chandler (The Animals)
John Paul Jones (Led Zeppelin)
Paul McCartney (Beatles, Wings)
John McVie (Fleetwood Mac)
Pino Palladino (Paul Young, Jeff Beck)
Bill Wyman (The Rolling Stones) (actually from Wales)

SOUL

Bobby "Blue" Bland (1930-)
James Brown (1933-)
Ray Charles (1930-)
Sam Cooke (1931-1964)
Robert Cray (1953-)
Aretha Franklin (1942-)
Mahalia Jackson (1911-1972)
Etta James (1938-)
Albert King (1923-1992)
B.B. King (1925-)
Junior Parker (1932-1971)
Wilson Pickett (1941-)
Otis Redding (1941-1967)
Sam & Dave (formed in 1961)
Dinah Washington (1924-1963)

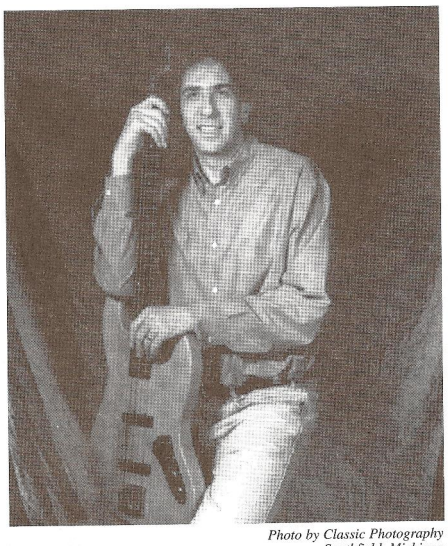
Bassists

Donald "Duck" Dunn (Booker T. & the MGs, other Stax/Volt artists)
Jerry Jemmott (Stax/Volt)
Chuck Rainey (Sam Cooke, Aretha Franklin, many others)

THE NEW (NOW) GENERATION

Colin James (1964-) Canada
Jonny Lang (1981-)
Kenny Wayne Shepherd (1977-)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Southfield, Michigan

Jon Liebman has performed extensively throughout the world, playing electric and acoustic bass for everything from jazz gigs and club dates to national television shows and full-scale concerts at Madison Square Garden. He has also played in the pit orchestras of many Broadway shows, including *Ain't Misbehavin', Dreamgirls, Fiddler on the Roof, Into the Woods, Les Misérables,* and *Phantom of the Opera.* Jon has toured with jazz greats Cleo Laine and Buddy De Franco, and has played bass for The Fifth Dimension, The Coasters, The Drifters, The Platters, The Chiffons, Billy Eckstine, Lesley Gore, Eartha Kitt, José Feliciano, Julio Iglesias, and many others, and has an extensive recording career that includes playing bass on many commercials and albums, along with projects for Ford, General Motors, and the NBA. He has also been a finalist in the jazz division of the International Double Bass Competition.

In addition to *Blues Bass,* Jon is the author of *Funk Bass, Funk/Fusion Bass,* and *Rock Bass,* as well as a book of transcriptions of the music of fellow bassist Stuart Hamm. He has also had his big-band arrangements performed on "The Tonight Show" and "The Late Show."

Jon holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Jazz Studies and Contemporary Media from Wayne State University in Detroit, and a Master of Music degree in Studio Music and Jazz from the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida. He spent time in California, where he was very active in the Los Angeles music scene as a performer and writer, and is currently the President of the Specs Howard School of Broadcast Arts, in Southfield, Michigan. Jon lives with his wife, Mindy, and children, Josh, Rebecca, and Emily.